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January, 2002

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PENNSYLVANIA GAME NEWS (ISSN 0031-451X) is published monthly for \$12 per year, \$34.50 for three years, or membership in Pennsylvania's Cooperative Farm-Game Project or Safety Zone Project; to Canada and all other foreign countries, \$13 U.S. currency, per year. Published by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Phone (717) 787-4250. Periodicals postage paid at Harrisburg, Pa. CHANGE OF ADDRESS: POSTMASTER: Send both old and new addresses to Pennsylvania Game News, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Allow six weeks for processing. Material accepted is subject to our requirements for editing and revising. Author payment covers all rights and title to accepted material, including manuscripts, photographs, drawings and illustrations. No information contained in this magazine may be used for advertising or commercial purposes. Opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Copyright © 2002 by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, an Equal Opportunity Employer, the programs of which are all administered consistent with the goals and objectives of Affirmative Action. All rights reserved.

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Newsstand consultant, Celtic Moon Publishing, 1-877-730-6263



Pennsylvania Game Commission Annual Report, 2000-01

Dramatic changes in 2001 will help shape a better future

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AS A LIFE-LONG hunter, and now as Executive Director of the Game Commission, I hear many people talking about “the good old days.” Reflecting on this comment over the past year, I’ve come to realize that when it comes to hunting and trapping in Pennsylvania, we are living in the best times right now.

For comparisons, let’s look at hunting in 1967 — the middle of what many refer to as the heyday of hunting — and 2000. In 1967, 1,060,998 general hunting licenses were sold. Last year, in 2000, we sold 1,038,846.

In 1967, during a 5-day season, hunters harvested 568 bears. In 2000, a 3-day season, hunters harvested a record 3,075.

In 1967, when hunters were allowed one turkey a year, 23,000 were taken, and there was no spring season. In 2000, more than 88,500 turkeys were harvested during the spring and fall seasons, and hunters were allowed to take one bird in each season.

In 1967, hunters took 144,415 deer, including 78,268 bucks. And at that time, hunters were allowed only one deer per year. Last year, 504,600 deer were harvested, including more than 203,000 bucks. In addition, hunters were permitted to take one buck and, with appropriate antlerless licenses, up to two antlerless deer. And in the Special Regulations counties, hunters could take even more.

In light of these facts, it’s obvious to me that “the good old days” are right now.

Sure, small game hunting is not what it was 30 years ago, but that’s largely due to urban/suburban sprawl and changing agricultural practices. The Game Commission has expended millions of dollars over the years to develop small game habitat on our game lands and private lands in our cooperative public access programs, but we will never be able to keep pace with what’s being lost to changing land use practices.

In addition, after 30 years, furtakers once again have the opportunity to pursue bobcats, and just this past fall, the first elk season in seven decades was held.

Our Deer Management Section has made tremendous strides in just the past two years. Under the leadership of Dr. Gary Alt and with the support of the Board of Game Commissioners, antlerless deer hunting opportunities have been increased to bring the herd into balance with available habitat and to establish a more natural breeding ecology.

In addition, with the support of our WCOs and in cooperation with Penn State University, several major research projects have been launched to learn more about our deer herd. Projects include a 2-year fawn mortality study; a conception-date



THE NEW LOGO for the agency was unveiled in 2001. Designed by Bob Sopchick, it features our state flower, mammal, tree and bird, as well as a bald eagle and Canada geese. The logo is being phased in on new equipment, uniforms and other items.

study, which indicates when the rut takes place; and an antler measurement study, which has already shown that the “once a spike, always a spike” notion is false.

In the fall of 2001, the Game Commission and Penn State University launched a study of hunter movement, success and attitudes. A second project is a 3-year study that will involve radio-collaring 600 fawn bucks to monitor survival, dispersal, movement during the rut and hunting, and antler development.

Expect to see more from the Game Commission in the coming years. Our employees are committed to preserving Pennsylvania’s rich hunting and trapping heritage, to improving wildlife habitats and to better serving the public. And, from the following pages of this annual report, I’m sure you’ll see that we are well on our way.

Wildlife Management

The basic goal of our wildlife management program is to manage for healthy, functional wildlife populations that are socially acceptable to Pennsylvanians and their communities. We survey and monitor wildlife populations. We study the relationships between wildlife, habitat and humans and their communities. We develop and implement management plans. We apply the management tools of hunting, trapping, habitat management, enforcement, communications and education to achieve a balance between biological and social acceptability.

GOAL: Manage wildlife populations at biologically and socially acceptable levels.

The Deer Management Team concluded the second year of an aggressive campaign to address deer population imbalances. Led by Dr. Gary Alt, the team focused on educating the public and deer management decision makers; starting new research; and a comparison of our deer program with those of other states. The harvest objective in 2000 was to stop the population growth that had occurred in 1998 and '99. This was accomplished principally through increased hunting opportunities: a 3-day firearms antlerless season starting on Saturday, concurrent with the last day of the antlered season; allowing junior, senior, disabled and military license holders to take antlerless deer during the entire 2-week antlered season; and a 3-day October antlerless muzzleloader season. Thanks to those, along with excellent weather, the population was stabilized at a post-season density of 23 deer per square mile (39 per square mile of forest), which is still 86 percent above the commission’s goal of 12 deer per square mile (21 per square mile of forest).

In 2000, hunters harvested a record 504,600 deer. The antlered harvest was 203,221, up from 194,368 in 1999. The antlerless harvest was 301,379, up from 184,224 in '99. The projected 2001 preseason deer population was approximately 1.5 million, about the same as in 2000.

In March, hunters were surveyed to find out their opinions, knowledge and perceived priorities toward regulation changes. The highest levels of support were expressed for changes that would allow bucks to live longer and create a more natural buck-to-doe ratio. Hunters also expressed significant support for allowing archers to hunt antlerless deer during the fall flintlock antlerless season, antlerless hunting before the rut in November, and allowing junior, senior, disabled and active duty military hunters to take antlerless deer with centerfire rifles during the fall, antlerless-only flintlock season.

In April, to reduce the statewide deer herd about 5 percent, the Commission approved for 2001-02: a 12-day concurrent antlered and antlerless firearms season for all hunters; a 7-day antlerless muzzleloader season in October; a 3-day antlerless rifle season in October for junior, senior, disabled, and military license holders; making unsold antlerless licenses



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available, up to two per hunter, and without the “private land only” restriction instituted in 1999; allowing a hunter to harvest another deer after just tagging the first; and crossbows during the regular firearms season in Special Regs. Areas.

Based on increased efficiencies expected from these new regulations, the 2001 antlerless license allocation was, including the six Special Regulations Areas counties, 780,250, down from 830,650 in 2000.

Several deer research projects were initiated in 2000. Because of our traditional deer hunting structure, there is an unbalanced adult sex ratio and a preponderance of 1½-year-old males in our breeding population.

To determine the effects of this on the timing and distribution of breeding and fawning, WCOs collected information from roadkilled deer from January through May. In all, 1,075 deer were examined and conception dates for 608 were determined. The height of the rut in 1999 was October 31 to November 23. The average conception date was November 17. About 90 percent of all breeding took place between October 16 and December 16. The average projected birth date was June 2. Of all adult does examined, 89 percent were pregnant; 23 percent had one fetus, 73 percent had two, and 4 percent had three. Of does less than one year old, 28 percent had been bred. Of these, 86 percent had one fetus and the rest had two. On average, fawns were bred on December 3, 16 days later than adult does.

A 2-year study of fawn survival was initiated in May 2000. Mortality is being evaluated on two areas, one in good habitat and the other in poor habitat. In 2000, 98 fawns (52 in one area and 46 in the other) were radio-collared. Preliminary results indicate that survival was about 30 percent in poor habitat and 58 percent in good habitat. Predators (coyotes and bears) accounted for much of the mortality in poor habitat. In good habitat, starvation, malnutrition and diseases were more important factors. In 2001, the final year of this study, 120 fawns were radio-collared.

Because yearlings comprise more than 80 percent of the buck harvest, another study was launched to explore ways to allow some of these males to live longer. To determine what difference this might make in antlers, we measured 3,184 sets during the 2000 season. Statewide, 1½-year-old bucks averaged about 5 points and a 10-inch spread; 2½-year old bucks, 7 points and a 15-inch spread; and 3½ and older bucks, 8 points and a 17-inch spread. From poor habitat, 1½-year-old bucks averaged 4 points and a 9-inch spread, while those from excellent habitat averaged 6 points and an 11-inch spread.

The 2000 black bear harvest was 3,075, a record and up substantially from 1999's 1,741. Bears were taken in 50 of our 67 counties. Similar to past years, 63 percent of the harvest occurred on opening day and bears averaged 2 to 3 years of age. Approximately equal numbers of males and females were taken. Based on field-dressed weights taken at check stations, most males weighed around 200 pounds, live weight, while females weighed around 150; however, 29 males weighing more than 500 pounds were examined.

For 2000, computers were used at all 25 check stations. These reduced the time needed to process bears and calculate harvest statistics. Check station computers were equipped with records of all bear captures, which meant that every hunter who took a tagged bear could receive a capture history of his trophy right at the check station.

Ideal weather, light snow cover and cool temperatures that kept hunters active accounted for the record harvest. In 1999, the opposite was true. Another major difference was that fall foods, particularly beechnuts and acorns, were plentiful, which kept bears from denning early in 2000.

A small increase in the number of hunters may have contributed to the record 2000

harvest. However, since about 1980, hunter success has been slowly increasing independent of hunter numbers, weather and fall food supply. During the 1980s, about 1 in 70 hunters got a bear, improving to 1 in 50 during the 1990s, and 1 in 33 in 2000. This trend is the result of a growing bear population.

The bear population has increased from 4,000 in the late 1970s to approximately 15,000 in 2000. Still, the percent of the population taken by hunters has remained around 20 percent, and 2000's 19.8 was no exception.

The present bear management goal is to harvest 20 percent. Given that population growth has continued despite this goal being met most years, a larger harvest rate may be necessary, particularly in areas where bear/human conflicts are growing.

The 2001 elk survey indicated a population of 622, the first time the population has exceeded 600 and up nearly 10 percent from the 566 the year before. As recently as 1992, the herd numbered only 183. Based on aerial surveys, the estimate is conservative. Two days prior to the survey, a snowstorm dumped up to five inches of snow, temperatures fell and winds increased. Elk — like many animals — often bed in thick conifer cover during winter storms, making them less visible.

The herd breakdown, (2000 numbers in parenthesis) was: 106 (99) branch-antlered bulls; 56 (52) spike bulls; 311 (288) cows; and 135 (120) calves; unknown 14 (7). We expected the herd to exceed 700 by the fall of 2001, and it could reach 1,000 by 2005. The population has been growing 10 to 16 percent annually since the 1980s. It appears to have stabilized in the traditional range of Elk and Cameron counties. However, natural dispersal and three years of trap-and-transfer have increased elk numbers in other areas.

Known mortalities over the past year totaled 50, up from 47 the year before. A breakdown (with 1999 figures in parentheses) were: highway collisions, 12 (11); accidental, 3 (1); brain worm infestation, 2 (2); shot for crop damage, 4 (12); and illegal, 6 (6). Other causes of mortality included: struck by trains, 6 (8); tick infestation, 2 (0); natural causes, including malnutrition, 0 (1); and unknown, 15 (6). Annual Elk mortality has averaged between six and eight percent in recent years.

Personnel from DCNR's Bureau of Forestry and the Game Commission continued development of a long-term habitat enhancement plan for the elk range. All existing managed herbaceous openings were entered into the large-scale plan, including location, shape, adjacent habitat type, land ownership, maintenance schedule and use by elk. Additional acreage is planned for development based on land ownership, elk movement and use, adjacent land use practices, and potential to attract and hold elk. The plan was completed in the summer of 2001.

In April 2001 the Game Commission approved the first elk hunt since 1931, for November 12-17. Thirty licenses were authorized.

Pennsylvania's turkey population continued to rise, from 1999's 300,000 to 320,000 in 2001. Even though reproduction was poor in 2000, due to

SGL 321 was dedicated in June. Known as the Kelly Estate, the tract was purchased by the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and the Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy.





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wet spring weather, the record number of hens offset their low success rate. An average winter allowed substantial winter survival, and turkey populations were at another record level for the 2001 nesting season. While populations are at all-time highs for most of the state, they remain low in TMA 7B and TMA 9A.

While the cool wet weather in late May and early June 2001 may have lowered the potential for a record hatch, the warm and dry summer provided ample renesting opportunities. Overall recruitment in 2001 was slightly above average, which could translate into a record fall harvest. Spring harvests continue to increase, with preliminary figures from report cards indicating a spring 2001 harvest around 41,000.

Total 2000 turkey harvest was 88,680, a record, surpassing 1995's 83,474. This exceptional harvest can be attributed to the record recruitment of 1999. Fall 2000 harvest was 44,865, the second highest ever.

Statewide, hunters took 1.7 gobblers per forested square mile during the spring 2000 season, compared to 1.4 in 1999. As in past years, harvest densities were highest in western and eastern TMAs; TMA 1A being the highest, with 5.3 gobblers per forested square mile. On average, 19 percent of spring 2000 turkey hunters got gobblers, up from 16 percent in '99.

The longer fall seasons for TMAs 6, 7A and 8 may have contributed to the substantial 2000 fall harvest. On average, fall hunter success was 19 percent, up slightly from the 17 percent in 1999. The highest success rates were in TMA 1A, 9B and 2. Statewide, hunters harvested 1.7 turkeys per forested square mile, similar to 1999's 1.6. TMAs 1A and 2 showed the highest harvest densities, 4.2 and 3, respectively. Hunter densities in TMA 1A and 1B were substantial, with 13 to 14 hunters per forested square mile (down from 16 in 1999), but did not affect hunter success rates. Statewide, fall hunter density was 9 hunters per forested square mile.

In 2000, 298,103 turkey hunters took to the woods, 231,860 in the spring and 230,448 in the fall. This is a 5.5 percent decline from 1999, but above the 10-year average.

During the winter of 2000-01, 230 turkeys (168 females, 62 males) were released at 10 sites in Berks, Chester, Lancaster, and York counties, to bolster the population in TMA 9A. Also, the fall season was closed in TMA 9A. Spring season remains open, as spring gobbler hunting does not impact turkey populations. The fieldwork for the TMA 7B research project was recently completed. (See "What's Up" in the December *Game News*.) Study objectives included determining turkey survival rates, mortality, nest success and habitat use. A total of 144 hens were radio-tagged (81 adults, 63 juveniles) and monitored daily. Annual hen survival rates and poult survival rates were lower than average. We currently are analyzing the causes for these low survival rates.

Our partnership with the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) was strengthened with the joint funding of an NWTF regional wild turkey biologist. This NWTF biologist covers Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey and Ohio, and will work closely with the Game Commission and our wild turkey management plan.

As 2000 drew to a close, a survey was sent to 4,571 turkey hunters, asking them about their hunting activities and opinions. Results will be available in early 2002.

Cooperating grouse and woodcock hunters help us monitor grouse population trends. Cooperators logged 10,000 hours, with a statewide rate of 1.39 flushes per hour, down from 1.49 in 1999-2000. This rate was slightly below the 36-year average of 1.45. Flushing rates dropped in all regions except the Southwest.

The number of grouse hunters in 2000-01 dropped 7 percent from the previous year.

Harvest estimates showed that 162,000 hunters took 145,500 birds. Harvest per hunter-day also dropped slightly, in part because of lower grouse populations.

Grouse populations on SGL 176 in Centre County have been monitored since 1976 to measure responses to a 2½-acre patch cutting program set up on a 40-year rotation. The managed area continues to carry more grouse than the unmanaged area, and the population on the study area is increasing again, after a drop that began in 1994. The number of drumming grouse on the treated area in the spring of 2001 was the second highest recorded. In patches 13 to 25 years old, there was one drumming grouse for every 13.4 acres, the highest observed in the study. In patches 12 to 15 years of age, there was a drummer for every 8.6 acres of mixed oak and for every 6 acres of aspen-scrub oak.

We have learned that it may take 12 years or more before the full potential of a cutting is realized. We do not yet know how long the effect of the cuttings will last, which is important for both public and private landowners interested in grouse management. Work began on developing a geographic information system for the grouse habitat study.

In 2001, 219 square kilometer plots were surveyed for breeding waterfowl. Similar surveys have been conducted in the Atlantic Flyway since 1989, to monitor breeding waterfowl in the northern half of the flyway. In Pennsylvania, the estimated breeding wood duck population was 56,000 pairs, up 39 percent from 2000 and 16 percent above the recent 10-year average. Mallard populations were 89,000, similar to 2000 but 11 percent below the 10-year average. The 2001 Canada goose estimate of 246,859 is similar to the 10-year average (193,266) and the 2000 estimate (225,472). Our highest densities of geese were in the northwest (3.11 geese/m²) and southeast (2.79/m²). The number of resident goose pairs was 96,500, similar to the 1991-2000 average of 75,300. Since 1989, there have been significant increases in total numbers and breeding pairs of Canada geese in the state.

Preseason duck banding continued in cooperation with the Atlantic Flyway. During 2001, more than 4,000 ducks were banded, including 2,872 mallards, 33 black ducks and 1,100 wood ducks.

During June 2001, 2,306 Canada geese were banded. This information, along with measurements of harvested birds, are used to determine the proportion of migrant geese in the harvest and to aid in developing proposals to expand goose hunting opportunities. Thanks to this program, goose hunters are enjoying greatly expanded hunting opportunities throughout most of the state.

Research to determine goose nesting success and gosling production at Pymatuning began in 2001. Results will provide information needed to maintain a sustainable Canada goose population at Pymatuning and may aid in identifying the level of harvest needed to control goose numbers in other locations, particularly in areas with nuisance and damage problems. We marked and monitored 164 nests to estimate nest success. Of the 836 eggs laid, 210 (25%) were taken by predators, 81 (10%) had undeveloped embryos, and 556 (65%) hatched, of which 527 (95%) goslings were marked with web-tags. Later, during regular goose banding operations in late June, we recaptured 163 (31%) of these web-tagged goslings. Thus far, nest success and gosling survival rate estimates are similar to those found in other studies and were considered good.

Tundra swans wintering in the Atlantic Flyway are being studied through a cooperative effort with North Carolina, Virginia and Maryland. In February 2001, satellite transmitters were attached to five swans wintering in Lancaster and Lebanon counties, to identify breeding, wintering and important migration areas. Another 20 were marked with conventional radio transmitters, to estimate survival rates and obtain information on local habitat use and movements on wintering areas.



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During mid to late March, 32 swans radio-marked in Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina were located at Middle Creek and other areas in southeastern Pennsylvania. This represents more than 25 percent of the radio-marked tundra swans from cooperating states and illustrates how important southeastern Pennsylvania, Middle Creek in particular, is for swan migration habitat. By early June, swans had arrived on their breeding grounds in the Canadian arctic.

Movements of swans equipped with satellite transmitters can be viewed from the Game Commission website. Maps are updated every few weeks. For this study, more than \$14,000 was provided by the Northwest Pennsylvania Duck Hunters Association, Susquehanna River Waterfowlers Association, and the Blue Mountain, Lehigh Valley and Susquehannock chapters of Safari Club International.

An estimated 13,000 hunters took 31,000 woodcock in 2000, a slight increase in both harvest and take per hunter. Recruitment (immatures per adult female) was up in 2000. The annual woodcock singing ground survey indicated no change in Pennsylvania's woodcock populations between 2000 and 2001; however, a decline in overall woodcock populations has occurred over the last 10 years.

Each year federal managers conduct a wing-collection survey to obtain information on woodcock reproductive success. In early February the Game Commission hosted biologists from 12 states for the annual "wing bee." Almost 9,000 wings submitted by hunters from 24 states were examined. In addition to an index to recruitment, the wing bee gives biologists from many states an opportunity to exchange information on woodcock research and management.

This past year we worked on several woodcock habitat projects. At Bald Eagle State Park a plan is being developed to emphasize early successional habitat. Partners include the DCNR, USFWS, the Ruffed Grouse Society and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Singing ground surveys were run to establish baseline data for measuring breeding woodcock response to habitat management. A preliminary map of the area was completed from digitized aerial photographic data.

In northeastern Pennsylvania, both public and private groups are working with the Game Commission on woodcock and other species that depend on early successional habitat. Progress continued on a plan to manage SGL 314 — a Pennsylvania Important Bird Area — with a focus on wildlife, including woodcock, that depend on early successional habitats.

Preliminary results of a study examining hunting indicated that hunting had little impact on woodcock survival. This was good news for woodcock hunters as we went to the maximum season allowed by federal regulations, 25 days over a 30-day period.

The annual mourning dove call-count indicated no change in dove populations between 2000 and 2001, or over the last 10 years.

After a 30-year closure, bobcat hunting and trapping resumed, on a limited scale, in 2000-01. From 3,276 valid applications, 290 hunters and trappers were awarded bobcat harvest permits, allowing them to harvest one bobcat within portions of northcentral and northeastern Pennsylvania. During the season, 58 bobcats — 29 males and 29 females — were harvested from: Bradford (7), Cameron (1), Centre (1), Clearfield (7), Clinton (5), Elk (4), Luzerne (5), Lycoming (8), McKean (1), Pike (1), Potter (7), Sullivan (4), Susquehanna (1), Tioga (5) and Wyoming (1). The success rate was 22.1 percent.

Males averaged 24.5 pounds; females 18.6. The heaviest male weighed 33 pounds; the heaviest female, 31.

Every successful hunter and trapper was contacted, usually within four days. Of the bobcats taken, 45 were trapped and 13 were taken by hunters. Nearly 71 percent of successful permit holders resided in the harvest zones. However, only 37 percent of the permits were allocated to hunters and trappers who lived in these areas.

A similar survey was mailed to holders who did not get a bobcat. Twelve percent did not attempt to harvest a bobcat, and 7 percent indicated they obtained the permit only for license collection purposes. Sixty-two percent indicated that they had hoped to get a bobcat while pursuing other species. The bobcat harvest objective for 2001-02 remained at 175, and 520 permits were issued.

During 2000-01, trappers took 8,408 beavers. Based on WCO surveys, we estimate the statewide population at 28,736, down 3 percent from the year before. Our goal has been to gradually decrease the beaver population through regulated harvests. The population has decreased from 32,130 in 1996 to 28,736 today. Since 1996, the harvest has exceeded 8,000 each year, and has become relatively stable, partly due to changes in the bag limit, season length and trapping regulations. Stable pelt prices have also helped to maintain the consistent harvest level.

Since 1998, we have worked with the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and the Pennsylvania Trappers Association to conduct standardized trap testing studies and to promote the development of Best Management Practices (BMPs) for trapping furbearers. Efforts in Pennsylvania focused on eastern coyotes in 1998 and 1999, red foxes during 2000. Based on these studies, a draft BMP for trapping eastern coyotes has been developed and is being reviewed by wildlife management agencies and trapper associations. This draft will be finalized in 2002. Trap testing devices for red fox and gray fox will be tested during the 2001-02 season.

Conservation agencies across the nation worked hard last year to support the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA). CARA would have provided state fish and wildlife agencies with \$350 million a year to manage declining species and imperiled habitats. Although CARA stalled, Congress did, for the first time, appropriate \$50 million to state wildlife agencies. This created a new Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program (WCRP) under the Pittman-Robertson Act expressly for “species of the greatest conservation concern.” Congress also appropriated \$50 million for fish and wildlife conservation in their Interior Appropriations bill, that will be made available to the states via a federal grant program.

Pennsylvania was eligible for approximately \$1.5 million under WCRP. Plans were made to use these funds for high profile, high priority conservation, education and recreation efforts, to be

SHAWN TOMB, Westfield, became the first person since 1970 to take a bobcat in Pennsylvania. Shawn trapped his trophy, a 24-pound female, in Potter County.





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implemented in cooperation with other conservation partners. We received 52 project proposals, requesting nearly \$8 million. A technical review committee reviewed all proposals and made project recommendations for Commission consideration. Projects will be started in late 2001 and early 2002.

Although this new appropriation is important, it's nonetheless a short-term commitment on behalf of the federal government. CARA is still needed to provide a significant annual appropriation for state fish and wildlife agencies, to prevent species from declining to the point of endangerment. Preventative care is less expensive, less confrontational and more effective than costly rescues of endangered and threatened species.

With the Pennsylvania Audubon Society, a program to identify important places for birds has been developed. Called the Important Bird Areas (IBA) project, this has become a prototype for many other states. Site selection criteria include the presence of endangered or special concern species, concentrations of birds, and habitats characteristic or rare in Pennsylvania. So far, 73 sites have been selected.

Our staff will continue to work with Audubon to conduct bird surveys at IBAs on game lands, map important habitats and discuss management priorities. Already, the threatened least bittern was confirmed breeding in Conneaut Marsh for the first time in at least 20 years, nocturnal bird surveys counted rails and other wetland species, and a round-table discussion with 20 experts was held, covering everything from exotic plants to rare birds, and highlighting the importance of Conneaut Marsh.

Volunteerism is the backbone of bird monitoring programs, and the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) is a model of volunteer dedication. The BBS is a network of 3,000 routes across the continent; 98 are in Pennsylvania. A route consists of 50 stops spaced a half-mile apart along rural roads. All birds seen or heard within a quarter-mile are recorded. From 50 to 80 species may be detected during a 4-hour survey. Many volunteers have surveyed their routes for more than 15 years; a few — such as retired Wyoming County Commissioner Bill Reid — have over 30 years of service. The BBS is the most important source of information on bird population trends. Because of this survey we know, for example, that meadowlarks are declining and red-tailed hawks are increasing.

What do a farm field in Lancaster County, a county park in the city of York, a hillside overlooking Pine Creek, and a telephone pole along Shenango Reservoir have in common? They are all bald eagle nest sites discovered in 2001. These new nests, along with established pairs, brought to 53 the number of bald eagle pairs nesting in the state, more than we've had in well over a century. Furthermore, the locations of these nests tended to be closer to human activity than were older nest sites, and they're proving to be just as successful, too.

The world again had the opportunity to peek into the daily life of growing peregrine falcons on the Rachel Carson building in Harrisburg via cameras linked to the Internet. More than 50 million "hits" make this one of the most popular nature sites in the nation. The state's peregrine population remains constant at 10 active nests, which in 2001 again produced 18 young. One of 2000's young from the Rachel Carson building was found in northern New Jersey and a bird from Wilkes-Barre established residency near Toronto. Saw-whet owls, Henslow's sparrows, great blue herons, golden-winged warblers, black-crowned night-herons, ospreys and upland sandpipers are among other birds being surveyed.

The commonwealth's mammals include some that dance on their fingertips in the night sky, that swim under and even run across water, and that live in remote, rocky

habitat. The Indiana bat, water shrew and Allegheny woodrat are examples of the diverse attributes of small mammals.

Although the Indiana bat was declared an endangered species in 1967, its population has continued to decline. In the summer of 1997, Indiana bats were found among thousands of little brown bats in the attic of a retired church at Canoe Creek State Park. Previously thought to roost only in trees during summer, this discovery is a first for two reasons: the first Indiana bat maternity colony found in the northeastern U.S. and the first maternity colony ever found in a building. It provides a unique opportunity to study this endangered species because researchers can get inside the roost.

In late May 2000, Indiana bats fitted with tiny transmitters were tracked to their feeding and resting sites. Foraging areas, alternate roost trees and the use of a large artificial roost called the "bat condo" were documented. For comparison with data from 2000, in 2001, five female little brown bats were tracked. Although these two species share a summer maternity colony and a nearby winter hibernation site, preliminary findings suggest their foraging areas and alternative roost preferences are very different.

Changes to our environment have threatened many bat populations and created a need for education in awareness and management of these beneficial animals. Since 1994, annual Bat Conservation and Management Workshops have been hosted by Bat Conservation International, Inc., the Game Commission and DCNR Bureau of State Parks. These conferences provide unique demonstration areas for hands-on training in species identification and research, management and mitigation techniques. Participants come from state and federal agencies, colleges and universities, and environmental consulting firms. To date, more than 330 people from throughout North America, as well as Guatemala, United Kingdom, Tanzania and Taiwan, have taken part in these workshops.

In another effort, DCNR, the US Army Corps of Engineers and the Game Commission are working to modify an abandoned railroad tunnel in Lehigh Gorge State Park. Proposed modifications will improve and protect habitat for nesting swallows, Allegheny woodrats and hibernating bats, and reduce risks to park visitors.

During the year, 57 sites were surveyed to locate present or past populations of the state-threatened Allegheny woodrat. Mist-nets were used to sample forest clearings used by bats in summer; live-traps were used at mine and cave entrances in spring and fall, and 27 artificial roosts were monitored for use by bats. Hibernating bats were counted in 35 mines and caves, including 14 with species of concern. James Hart, with The Nature Conservancy, contributed data on small mammals, including the northern water shrew, a species of concern. As with bird records, results are analyzed to determine the range, status and welfare of wildlife, all in a never-ending effort to develop research and management strategies to protect and enhance Pennsylvania's wildlife and wildlife habitats now and in the future.

PGC Commissioner Stephen Mohr, left, and Ken Brandt, right, Hunters Sharing the Harvest coordinator, gave to the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank, 1,412 spring breeders from our pheasant farms.





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Today the Game Commission's propagation program is designed to provide a top quality bird for hunting. In April 2000, the either sex pheasant hunting areas were expanded. This has allowed for a more equitable allocation of pheasants across the state and greatly increased the number of birds available.

For 2000, 17,175 hens were stocked in mid-October for dog training. A recent study showed hunters weren't very successful in harvesting birds stocked for the late season. Because weather can greatly limit hunter participation and bird survival during the late season, many of the northernmost counties did not receive a late season stocking. Instead, those birds were released in the regular season, when more hunters are afield. Birds released for the 2000 late season amounted to 3,709, down from 6,527 in 1999.

During the regular small game season, 121,202 cockbirds and 68,109 hens were released on lands open to public hunting. Participating sportsmen's organizations were provided 3,465 day-old chicks to raise and release. High schools and other organizations conducting embryology projects were provided 842 pheasant eggs and 567 chicks. Also, 6,700 surplus day-old hen chicks and 1,800 surplus eggs were sold for \$5,100.

In spring 2001, 1,412 spring breeders (1,330 hens and 82 males) were provided to "Hunters Sharing The Harvest." The remaining 16,073 hens and 1,300 males were released on public lands where habitat is conducive for nesting and brood rearing. Production on the agency's four game farms was excellent, with a total distribution of 239,712 ring-necked pheasants.

For the third year, tours of our four game farms were held in September, to provide people with an opportunity to learn more about our pheasant propagation program.

Wildlife Habitat Management

Human activities and natural processes have altered habitat quality in many areas, to the detriment of many publicly preferred wildlife species. The protection and enhancement of wildlife habitats work to ensure viable populations of all wildlife. We need to develop and implement habitat programs and projects that recognize the life requirements of desirable species on a landscape scale, regardless of land ownership, to improve conditions for wildlife and ensure their long-term health.

GOAL: Manage and improve wildlife habitats on public and private lands to sustain viable wildlife populations.

Since June 1, 2000, when landowners began signing up for the Pennsylvania Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), approximately 1,750 landowners offered to place 52,600 acres in conservation cover plantings. PGC wildlife biologists and other Natural Resource Conservation Service staff completed 893 conservation plans encompassing 23,887 acres. More than 6,500 acres will be planted in native warm season grasses, and more than 1,150 acres will be forested riparian buffers, which equates to over 190 miles of buffers an average of 50 feet wide. Our goal was to have 15,000 acres ready for planting in the spring of 2001. As it turned out, we got 16,807.

Thus far, CREP has been an extremely successful private lands conservation program. Cooperating agencies and organizations are currently considering expansion of the program to another 21 counties and adding 50,000 acres of additional wildlife cover.

Near the end of 2000, representatives of game lands user groups were invited to par-

ticipate on an ad hoc advisory committee to formulate solutions to land use concerns identified by Game Commission managers. Between January and June 2001, five meetings were held, during which the committee provided recommendations for updating game land use regulations within the framework of the agency's mission, legal mandates and funding obligations. The resulting recommendations were provided to a much larger list of stakeholders for written comment.

This outreach process was then expanded through a series of open houses where the public could view a list of the Commission's concerns and provide written comment. After the open houses have been conducted, the committee will consider the collective input for incorporation into the final recommendations. The target date to complete the process is June 2002.

Within the year, Food and Cover Corps and land managers planted 3,338 acres of grain and 1,942 acres of grasses and legumes for wildlife. Another 870 acres of game lands were planted in or converted to warm season grasses. Approximately 9,860 acres of wildlife food plots were limed and fertilized; 16,600 acres were mowed to maintain high quality grasses and legumes; and 1,790 acres of field borders were cut to provide nesting and escape cover. Wetland restoration work was completed on 40 sites, through various habitat partners. Almost 2,700 trees were pruned to improve fruit and seed production, and, finally, 1,419 new nest boxes and 491 waterfowl nest structures were erected.

The Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, through the Pennsylvania Conservation Corps (PCC) provided \$210,708 and eight crews to help with planting seedlings, erecting streambank and forest fencing, planting warm season grasses and other habitat improvement projects. Crews also constructed storage buildings, painted and made repairs to Food and Cover headquarters, constructed and installed gates, and painted and maintained game lands boundary lines.

This year 1,868,150 evergreen and deciduous seedlings (26 species) were grown at the PGC nursery for planting on game lands and public access lands. The wood shop produced 4,416 bluebird boxes, 8,805 bluebird box kits, 595 wood duck boxes and hundreds of squirrel, kestrel, barn owl and bat boxes requested by land management officers for placement on game lands.

Commercial timber harvests are carried out on forested tracts of game lands to achieve and maintain optimum habitat diversity. During this fiscal year, 66 contracts were awarded, totaling 5,855 acres of commercial logging operations. Another 1,520 acres were treated with herbicide to remove ferns and low quality brush hampering the establishment of more beneficial food and cover species. Our two Upland Vegetation Management machines were used to clear 486 acres, so they could revert to an earlier, low ground cover, successional stage.

Timber harvesting on 6,160 acres produced \$14,502,652, a decrease from the previous year's record \$16,189,244. Despite the decrease, precipitated by a soft lumber market, the total still represents the second highest annual timber sales revenue on record.

Logging contractors completed 75 timber contracts during the year, and under the supervision of the forestry staff, improved 112 miles of haul roads and constructed 16 miles of new roads (which became wildlife food strips after seeding).

The Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act (Pittman-Robertson or P-R) was signed into law in 1937, to provide a stable and secure funding source for the management, conservation and enhancement of wildlife. P-R funds are derived from an 11 percent federal excise tax on sporting arms, ammunition and archery equipment, and a 10 percent tax on handguns. P-R funds are distributed to states based on each state's land area, license sales and total population.



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Upon federal approval, the Commission receives 75 percent of our expenditures from the USFWS, which administers P-R. The Game Commission's apportionment during federal fiscal year 2001 was \$7,872,824. This supported habitat management and maintenance activities on state game lands and cooperative public access program lands.

Wildlife Habitat Protection

A comprehensive habitat management program also provides environmental protection and monitoring to assure that habitat degradation is alleviated, reduced and mitigated. Traditionally, environmental protection has focused on air, water and soil quality. Although these concerns are essential, wildlife and habitat values should be incorporated in environmental protection. The commission strives for recognition of wildlife and its habitat as a valuable natural resource, just like air, water and soil.

GOAL: Ensure wildlife habitat values are considered in the decision making procedure involving alterations to the environment.

The Mineral Recovery Section awarded eight new leases on seven game lands in four regions. These leases are for the production of coal, natural gas, sand and gravel. The total for all mineral recovery leases stands at 36 companies on 31 game lands for total fiscal-year revenues of \$1,340,289, a 3-fold increase over the previous year's revenues.

The Environmental Planning and Habitat Protection Division is involved in eight Growing Greener projects sponsored by local watershed associations. The Game Commission, through partnering with the state Bureau of Mining and Reclamation, the Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation, and local watershed groups, has eliminated abandoned highwalls, spoil piles, tippable areas and acid mine discharges. Benefits from these projects include the establishment of herbaceous openings for wildlife and the elimination or abatement of acid mine discharges.

In addition, the division reviewed 2,189 permit applications and environmental impact studies from consulting firms, state and federal agencies, and mining and solid waste management companies. These reviews involved identifying impacts to endangered and threatened birds and mammals and critical or unique habitats, in order to avoid or minimize habitat losses.

The primary purpose of state game lands is to preserve wildlife habitat and provide for public hunting and furtaking. Additional recreational uses, including the development of hiking trails, are allowed when they are compatible with wildlife values and the agency's management programs. Through this division, the following trail projects were reviewed and agreements executed with various hiking organizations to:

Relocate the Darlington Trail on SGL 170, in Cumberland and Perry counties; relocate a section of the Horse-Shoe Trail on SGL 46, in Lancaster County; and relocate the Victoria Trail on SGL 211 in Dauphin County.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund is a federal program through which monies generated largely from royalties on offshore oil and gas production are distributed to state agencies for acquisition, planning and development of outdoor recreation projects. The Game Commission received \$150,000 from the fund to help acquire 1,100 acres for a new game lands, SGL 326, in Schuylkill County.

Land Access

Cooperative agreements with public and private landowners permit the commission to secure land for recreation and develop a network of conservation oriented individuals who participate in other habitat management projects. We intend to continue diligent efforts to encourage public and private interests to incorporate public hunting and conservation projects in their land use plans.

GOAL: Provide access to public and private lands for public hunting, trapping and other wildlife related recreational activities.

The commission acquired 10,639 acres this fiscal year, bringing the total SGL acreage to 1,408,600. There are now 297 game lands in 65 counties. Four survey crews perform, among other duties, boundary line surveys for all land acquired by the commission.

Local government bodies received \$1.20 per acre in-lieu-of taxes, as required by law. During the year \$1,691,700.63 was divided into three equal payments to the counties, school districts and townships where game lands are located.

Today there are 187 Farm-Game projects, in 59 counties, thanks to 21,384 landowners keeping 2,457,000 acres open to hunting. In the Safety Zone program, 1,407,400 acres are enrolled through 8,832 landowners. With four new landowners enrolled last year, 73 cooperators in the Forest Game program have opened 651,538 acres. In all, more than 30,000 landowners have opened 4.5 million acres of private land to public hunting.

Cooperators receive free *Game News* subscriptions, tree and shrub seedlings, wildlife food and cover seed mix, increased law enforcement protection, safety zone and other signs, technical guidance on wildlife conservation practices and, depending on funding and personnel constraints, labor to help develop wildlife habitat on their properties. During the year, more than 2,100 acres of warm season grasses were planted, 300 acres of woodland border edges were cut and more than 1,900 fruit producing trees were pruned or released to increase fruit production for wildlife on these private lands.

The success of these programs is due to the generosity of the cooperators and dedication of all the Game Commission representatives, especially the Food and Cover Corps employees and the Deputy WCOs, who promote and uphold the agency's responsibilities under each agreement.

Hunters also have a vital role in these programs. Every hunter and trapper should ask permission and respect the landowner and the lands they use. Common sense, courtesy and good judgment should always accompany hunters and trappers when afield.

The PGC building inventory has been placed on an electronic database and is being used to establish a 3-year priority listing of needed maintenance work. The listing is then used to prepare Group/Region budget requests.

Inspections are continuing to establish a final inventory of commission owned dams. The inspections are 95 percent complete, with a projected final inventory of around 140 dams, including 11 high hazard dams.

Inspections of five Game Commission region offices were completed, and emergency renovation work at the Southeast Region Office was done, at a cost of \$344,600 to date.

State and federal permits to drain and breach Rexmont Dam No. 1 and the Hammer Creek Dam, on SGL 156 were received. Estimated cost is \$100,000.

Site inspections, project design, contract specifications and permit applications for



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four dam and eight stream crossing projects were done, for a total estimated construction cost of \$479,000.

Provided design, contract specifications and related services for the renovation of the new Southwest Region Office (Fairfield elementary school). Occupancy is scheduled for 2002.

Reports, design and cost estimates for the draining and breaching of the Bradys Lake Dam and Rexmont Dam No. 2 were completed. A joint state/federal permit application was prepared and submitted for the Bradys Lake Dam project.

Communications and Education

The effective communication of knowledge and information is essential for a public conservation agency. Over the years, the commission has developed many programs to inform people about the value of wildlife and commission activities. Increasing this knowledge and appreciation for wildlife can be accomplished only through an effective education and communications effort.

Goal: Create and enhance public awareness, understanding and appreciation for the commonwealth's wildlife resources, their management, related recreational opportunities, and for the commission's programs and related services.

For calendar year 2000, 797 basic Hunter-Trapper Education courses were conducted and 35,884 students graduated, down from 39,224 the year before. Volunteer instructors continue to anchor the program. Nearly 2,600 participated in HTE course activity during the year.

During 2000, 69 hunting related shooting incidents were recorded, the lowest number ever in Pennsylvania since record keeping began. The incident rate was 6.72 per 100,000 participants, also the lowest rate on record.

DR. INAYAT KATHIO, right, was presented with a Game Commission Working Together for Wildlife print, "Maternal Instincts," by Northeast Region Wildlife Education Specialist Joe Wenzel, in token appreciation for his work with wildlife rehabilitators, for providing emergency treatment to injured wildlife, and for many other services he's donated to the Game Commission.

Ed Philbin



The Game Commission's voluntary bowhunting education course entered its second year, with 604 students taking advantage of the 28 courses held.

A formal Remedial Hunter Education program was developed. This remedial training is mandated by amendments to the Game and Wildlife Code that require certain individuals who had their hunting license privileges revoked to attend specific remedial hunter training before having their license privileges restored. This new law became effective July 1, 2001, and affected 137 individuals.

The agency is involved in a planning effort to improve the basic Hunter-Trapper Education program.

A 27-member planning team, representing all stakeholders, has worked diligently to develop a multi-year plan designed to teach new hunters to be safer and more ethical and responsible. The team's efforts have provided a solid foundation for the next phase in the planning process, which will be completed by agency personnel.

This year 1,071 educators participated in basic Project WILD workshops, and an additional 60-plus participated in peregrine falcon, elk and biodiversity workshops.

The Game Commission partnered with the Department of Education to provide 1-day advanced training for 75 current Project WILD and Project Learning Tree facilitators and 2-day training for new facilitators.

The Game Commission continues to work with National Project WILD to develop Science and Civics, Sustaining Wildlife materials for secondary students. The agency coordinated a team of educators to represent Pennsylvania at a national planning meeting in Texas. Additionally, the agency is working with the educational committees of the PA Biological Survey and PA Biodiversity Partnership in coordinating the development of Windows on the Wild materials. Activities were piloted with teachers in workshops and seminars throughout the year.

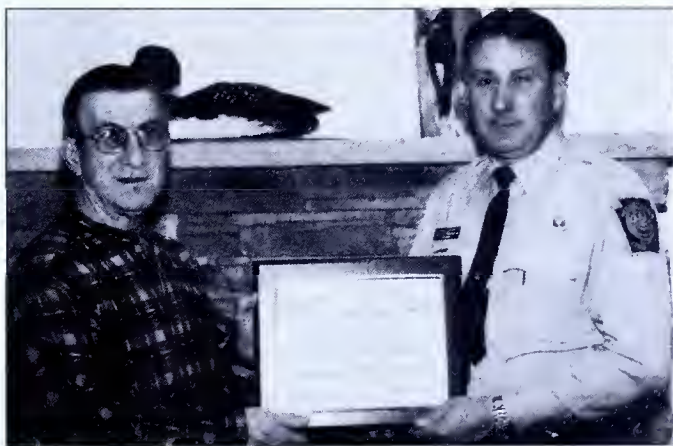
Twenty-two school and community youth groups were awarded WILD ACTION Grants to improve habitat for wildlife on school and community grounds. A variety of projects were funded including "Bird Garden" in Pittsburgh; "Handicap Accessible Raised-bed Butterfly Garden" in Meadville; "Flutter By My Garden" in Philadelphia, and "Courtyard Reclamation Project" in Exton. Funding for these grants was provided by the Game Commission, Pennsylvania Outdoor Writers Association, Conservation Officers of PA Association, Wild Resource Conservation Fund, and Local Chapter No. 1 of the National Wild Turkey Federation.



The DeCINDiOs of Schuylkill County are certainly to be commended for their voluntary efforts. JACQUELINE, above, who is also an HTE instructor, was named the Southeast Region's "Outstanding Deputy of the Year" and her husband, EUGENE, was named as one of the Southeast Region's Hunter-Trapper Education instructors. WCO John Denchak presented both of the awards.

Game News continues to be the primary voice of the Game Commission. The hunting stories, natural history accounts and, of course, Field Notes, remain popular with many outdoor enthusiasts, not just in Pennsylvania, but throughout the country. *Game News* also features articles about Game Commission research and management projects, law enforcement accounts by our WCOs, and as much Game Commission news as ever before.

Game News is also a prominent part of the agency's website. Every month we provide short descriptions of our features, a selection of Field Notes, news items that don't appear elsewhere on the website, and entire articles about Game Commission





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projects and programs, all as a way of reaching a wider audience.

As another way to better serve the public, *Game News* can now be found on most major newsstands throughout the state and in neighboring states.

Game News columnist Linda Steiner won Best Magazine Column award from the Pennsylvania Outdoor Writers Association for her “Another View” column titled “Voices” that ran in the July 2000 issue. This was the fourth time Linda has won a POWA Best Magazine Column Award for an “Another View” column. Also, her August 2000 column, “Happy Trails,” won a First Place in the Outdoor Writers Association of America’s Outdoor Travel awards category.

Larissa Rose joined the *Game News* staff in November 2000, and produced articles about the bear check stations; satellites on tundra swans; Woodcock Wing Bee; Wade Island heron rookery; 1920s elk hunts; bear management; and turkey research on TMA 7B. She also helped produce brochures for Law Enforcement and Wildlife Management, the 2000-01 *Hunting and Trapping Annual*, and the Game Commission’s 2002 calendar. Another publication produced, “Hunting in the Southcentral Region,” was the third in a series of six brochures.

The weekend of September 22-24, 2000 brought with it Pennsylvania’s 5th annual Becoming an Outdoors-Woman workshop. Nearly 100 women gathered at Camp Saginaw, near Oxford in Chester County, to learn outdoor skills in a non-intimidating, encouraging environment. Participants got to choose from more than 20 classes offered in skills such as hunting, shooting sports, canoeing, photography, orienteering, and wild game cooking.

In April, Lori Richardson was hired as our new Outreach Coordinator, to help expand the BOW program and develop other outreach initiatives. Since then, the PA BOW program has introduced its new website on the Game Commission homepage, held its first Beyond BOW workshop, and premiered the BOW Seasons newsletter.

Scott Rheam became our new video-production specialist and has been involved in producing educational videos on topics such as the elk viewing area at Winslow Hill, the PGC’s pilot canine program, and the duties of a wildlife conservation officer.

Robert Wesoloskie was hired as the agency’s first marketing specialist and has been very busy in developing a variety of marketing strategies to increase alternative funding for the agency and to improve the public’s awareness of the agency and appreciation for our management programs.

The agency’s website at www.pgc.state.pa.us continues to expand and improve the quantity and quality of information that is available to the public. The number of visitor sessions continues to grow both for the website and the agency’s e-commerce page, “The Outdoor Shop.”

Law Enforcement

A wildlife conservation agency establishes rules to conserve and protect wildlife, habitat and the public’s use of these resources. An effective law enforcement program is an essential component of wildlife conservation. The commission intends to fulfill its legislative mandate and commitment to the public and the wildlife resources through an effective law enforcement program.

Goal: Protect the wildlife resources of the commonwealth,

and ensure the safe and responsible use of these resources through the fair and equitable enforcement of wildlife laws.

In 2000-01, \$1,237 was expended to supply and erect five bear deterrent fences to qualified beekeepers. An additional \$12,616 was expended to pay 53 claims for damage done by bears to bees, livestock and poultry.

During the year, 36 persons were denied hunting and furtaking privileges for failing to respond to a citation, and 480 had their privileges revoked for failing to pay their penalty in full within the required 180 days. Following notification to these individuals, 402 met their obligations and their privileges were restored.

With nearly a full complement of WCOs, and approximately 600 deputies, our field personnel prosecuted 7,402 cases during 2000. Also during that period, 11,061 warnings were issued. Penalties assessed totaled \$1,380,015 — an average of \$185 per case.

For the year 2000, 236 first-time offenders were arrested for hunting wildlife with bait or enticement. Should these individuals violate this law again, their hunting and trapping privileges will be revoked for one year. As a result of major violations committed in 2000, 798 persons lost their privileges to hunt and trap in Pennsylvania.

Shoulder patches that reflect the agency's new logo were ordered and will be distributed to all commissioned officers. Deputies were issued new vehicle identification door decals of the new logo. Uniform dress hats for all salaried officers were upgraded. Salaried officers will also be issued heavy duty brush trousers for field use.

Deterrent fencing procedures were modified to permit direct reimbursement to applicants for materials they purchase to construct approved non-electric deer and elk fences. The commission will continue to provide assistance with high tensile electric fencing. Some applicants have requested woven wire, and the agency has moved to accommodate these requests.

The number of administrative hearings held has remained fairly constant, between 50 and 70. However, the number of hearings requested by license issuing agents and special permit applicants has increased, while the number of individuals who request reviews of hunting license revocations has decreased.

Bureau personnel continue to process a growing number of permit applications. Special permits are issued to qualified persons for a wide range of activities, including regulated hunting grounds, bird banding and commercial wildlife pest control. More than 5,800 new permits were issued last year, making more than 39,000 on active status in 33 different categories. In addition, the bureau was also involved in is-



RICHARD A. SARVER was honored with the 2000 Outstanding Deputy Award for the Northwest Region. Officer Sarver has been serving the residents of Warren County for 28 years.



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suing 290 bobcat harvest permits. Through coordination with the taxidermy board, the bureau conducted two taxidermy tests and certified 39 new taxidermists.

The bureau also met quarterly with the wildlife rehabilitation council to interview new rehabilitator applicants as well as address problems and concerns. Bureau personnel also attended the Northeast Rehab Seminar and Symposium in New York.

Although these permits generated more than \$400,000 in fees, the agency doesn't recoup all of its administrative costs under the current fee schedule. In addition to streamlining regulations and processing procedures, the bureau has submitted increased fee amounts for many permits to the General Assembly for consideration.

The process of replacing the old Motorola mobile radios is continuing. These radios are being replaced with Kenwood radios, which operate on both VHF Hi Band and Lo Band frequencies, which give our officers direct contact with both State Police and DCNR.

Human Resources

The commission recognizes our employees and volunteers are the agency's most valuable resource. To carry out an effective wildlife management program, we must address the needs of recruiting, training, placing and maintaining a competent and effective work force that will best meet the goals and objectives of our organization and the public we serve. As we meet these goals

and objectives, we will provide equal employment opportunity and diversity in the workplace.



Goal: Recruit and develop a competent and effective workforce to protect and manage the commonwealth's wildlife resources.

With the beginning of the new millennium, the Ross Leffler School of Conservation enrolled the 26th Class of Wildlife Conservation Officers, which consists of 23 trainees. The curriculum was expanded from 38 weeks to 50 weeks, to include several new training modules and to ensure that adequate skill development takes place prior to graduation. New courses include a

Commissioner SAM DUNKLE has served as a deputy WCO for many years. Volunteers, deputies represent the backbone of the agency's law enforcement program and many of our other programs, too. In addition, they must attend regular training programs and pass rigorous exams.

40-hour Human Relations course, All-Terrain Vehicle Training, Structure of State and Local Government, Diversity Awareness, Marketing, Wildlife Diseases and new computer courses. Also added were a 40-hour course entitled Principles of Wildlife Management, conducted by Penn State University, and a 25-hour course on Mammalogy, presented by Dr. Jacob Bowman from Delaware State University. The 26th class is scheduled to graduate on March 9, 2002.

Recent amendments to the Worker's Compensation Act required all employers, including the commonwealth, to develop more stringent health and safety policies and procedures. New Game Commission programs initiated include the establishment of safety committees, workplace safety inspections, an employee safety suggestion program, accident and "near miss" investigations, and improved emergency evacuation plans for all facilities.

Approximately 380 Game Commission employees attended our successful statewide *Conference 2001* in February in Carlisle. The agenda featured prominent speakers from both inside and outside the agency. Presentations consisted of updated information on all agency disciplines, as well as current issues in wildlife management occurring on the national scale.

During the year the following projects were accomplished:

- Completed the mandatory annual officer survival skills training plan, which provides standardized lesson plans for verbal communication skills training, defensive tactics training, daylight survival firearms training and qualification, dim light and stress and judgment firearms training, and foul weather training and qualifications.
- Completed the mandatory annual Legal Updates course relating to conservation officer statutory authority and recent case decisions from Pennsylvania and federal courts. Expanded the region Legal Updates instructor cadre from 6 to 12, and provided training to all instructors who then conduct the regional training for all officers.
- Instructed an intensive 7-day deputy training course, consisting of 85 hours, for 25 deputy candidates.
- Revised the deputy self-study extension course to prepare candidates for the certifi-

The following licenses were issued for the 2000 — 01 license year:

Resident Adult	774,396
Resident Junior	57,661
Resident Junior Combination	43,174
Resident Senior	43,574
Resident Landowner	1,853
Nonresident Adult	65,007
Nonresident Junior	2,223
Nonresident Junior Combination	660
Nonresident 7-Day	3,098
Resident Archery	270,286
Nonresident Archery	13,937
Resident Muzzleloader	131,986
Nonresident Muzzleloader	5,751
Resident Migratory Game Bird License	116,202
Nonresident Migratory Game Bird License	4,419
Resident Antlerless Deer	791,289
Nonresident Antlerless Deer	23,602
Resident Adult Furtaker	17,174
Resident Junior Furtaker	311
Resident Senior Furtaker	916
Nonresident Adult Furtaker	146
Nonresident Junior Furtaker	2
Resident Bear	101,840
Nonresident Bear	2,439
Senior Lifetime Hunting	3,946
Senior Lifetime Combination	2,757
Senior Lifetime Combination (Upgrades)	762
Senior Lifetime Renewal Hunting	39,735
Senior Lifetime Furtaker	2

Total Revenue Received: \$35,814,444



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cation exam. Twenty-two deputy candidates passed the exam, and they were then commissioned and entered into a 1-year on-the-job training program.

- Completed six deputy training modules for use by district WCOs at deputy training meetings. The six modules consisted of:

Psychological Survival: Law Enforcement Stress and Burnout; Hostage Officer Survival; Introduction to Mantracking; Law Enforcement Professionalism; Cultural Diversity for Law Enforcement; Law Enforcement Administrative Directives.

- Conducted on-going legal, technical and equipment research for immediate training and long-term planning purposes.

- Conducted an advance training session in shooting incident reconstruction and advanced crime scene photography for the 12 regional WCOs who serve as wildlife forensic specialists. These officers provide local training and conducted district and regional training sessions. They also helped other officers in evidence recovery in high priority wildlife crimes, such as an eagle or elk killing.

- Initiated the pilot conservation law enforcement canine program. Two Labrador retriever pups, Sarge and Onyx, were donated in January and paired with WCO handlers Darin Clark and Linda Swank in March. The canine teams have already seen limited field service, while continuing in an ongoing training program to obtain certifications under the North American Police Work Dogs Wildlife Detector Dog Standards.

- Coordinated with DCNR to provide a 16-hour course on search and recovery operations for 24 WCOs, to enhance the PGC's ability to assist in such operations.

- Participated in the research and development of the Disease Eradication Team procedures for the Hoof and Mouth Disease response planning with the Bureau of Wildlife Management.

- Coordinated law enforcement presentations for the PGC statewide conference, which included search and seizure updates by the Luzerne County District Attorney's Office, and an officer safety program called "The Bulletproof Mind" by Lt. Colonel Dave Grossman, a nationally recognized lecturer.

Licensing

The modern day conservation movement originated with license buyers and the money they paid for those privileges. The licensing of hunters and trappers provides approximately 50 percent of the agency's operating income. Additionally, licensing allows the agency to evaluate and control management programs and monitor public participation.

Goal: Promote cost effective and progressive licensing systems while maintaining simplicity and responsiveness to the license buyer.

With the opening of "The Outdoor Shop" in October 2000, the sale of hunting licenses on our e-commerce website has become quite popular. Many residents and non-residents are taking advantage of the convenience of applying for licenses online.

2000 license sales increased in almost all categories from 1999. Muzzleloader license sales jumped 30 percent; junior resident combination license sales climbed 21 percent; and senior lifetime combination license sales were up 28 percent. Overall, unit sales increased by 5 percent and revenue increased 3 percent.

Information Technology

The Game Commission has a strong commitment to information technology and recognizes the tremendous benefits of innovative, technological solutions to information management. This program area services all commission programs and provides a backbone for communication, data analysis, financial operations, statistical analysis, and a variety of other functions essential to operate our agency.

Goal: Provide the latest advances in information technology for solutions to program objectives.

Throughout the year we have been pursuing our agency's compliance with commonwealth initiatives. The data center consolidation initiative is an ongoing process. The data communications conversion to the Adelphia contract is almost complete. Work on Imagine PA enterprise resource management has begun.

By far the largest endeavor has been upgrading the agency's several hundred computers to Windows 2000, MS Office and Outlook electronic mail programs. Each computer had to be upgraded and every employee trained. To accomplish this, we contracted for three support specialists for six months to assist.

Within our agency we have been adapting our deer information systems in support of the deer management group. Bobcat and elk permit systems were developed, including Internet application capability. We continue to support our in-house application systems, databases, data communications network and personal computer support. Our computer operations staff steadfastly supplies desired reports and computer program runs. Finally, we cannot forget our data analyst and data entry personnel, who keep the vital information flowing.

PGC FINANCIAL REPORT

Ross E. Starner, Comptroller

July 1, 2000 to June 30, 2001

The accompanying Balance Sheet and Statement of Changes in Unreserved/Undesignated Fund Balance were prepared using the modified accrual basis of accounting, whereby revenue actually earned and amounts expended or payable at June 30, 2001 are reported. On this basis of accounting, the Unreserved/Undesignated Fund Balance in the Game Fund was \$26,436,215, a decrease of \$1,547,612 or 5.53 percent from June 30, 2000. Fiscal year 2000-01 expenditures exceeded revenue earned and prior year lapses, resulting in the decrease in the Game Fund balance.

General fixed assets, such as land, buildings and equipment, reported by the Game Commission as of June 30, 2001, were \$99,334,876. Fixed assets are reported at cost or estimated historical cost; no depreciation is provided. Donated fixed assets are recorded



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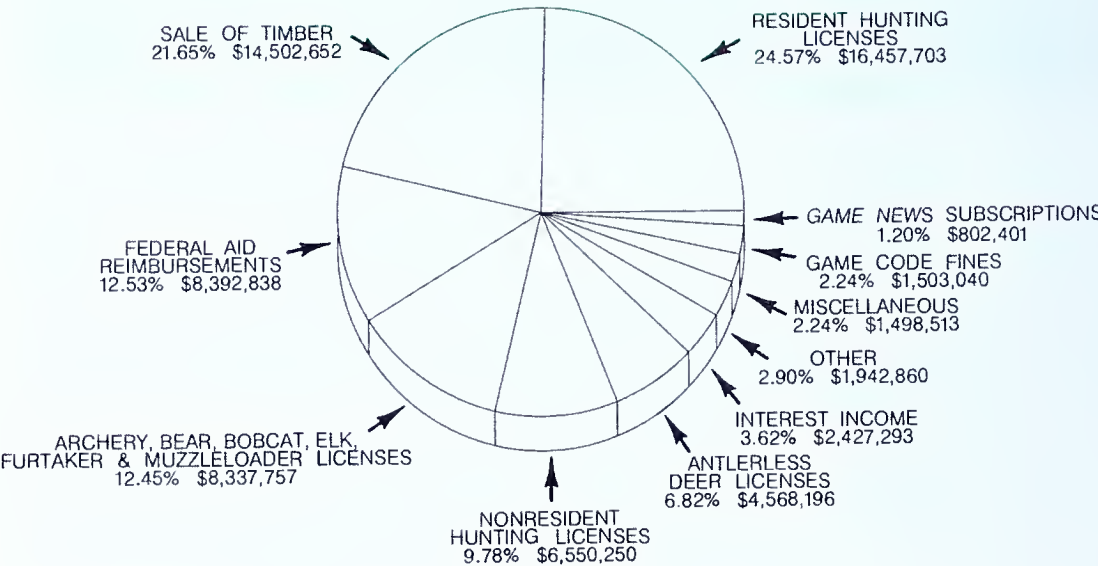
at fair market value at the time of donation. General fixed assets are not included in the Balance Sheet, consistent with the modified accrual basis of accounting.

All other schedules included in this report were prepared on a cash basis combined with an encumbrance budgetary system, and as such are consistent with that of the previous year.

Actual revenue collected and credited to the Game Fund during the 2000-01 fiscal year was \$66,983,503, an increase of \$2,185,416 or 3.37 percent over the previous year's actual cash receipts. Resident and non-resident antlerless deer licenses increased by \$437,009, due to allocation increases. Muzzleloader hunting licenses increased by \$301,322, due to changes in regulations that increased hunting opportunities. Federal Aid increased by \$866,987 and Game Law fines increased by \$426,617. Offsetting these increases was a decrease in wood products sales of \$1,686,592 or 10.42 percent. The market prices were not favorable, causing timber contractors to harvest less timber.

Actual current year operating expenditures and commitments totaled \$66,842,015, an increase of \$3,905,159 or 6.2 percent from last year. Salary, benefits and training costs increased by \$1,122,826 or 2.7 percent due to contract increases and filling of vacancies. Land purchases and acquisition costs increased by \$969,017. Maintenance and improvements of buildings, grounds and machinery increased by \$731,767, or 42 percent, as there was major air conditioning and electrical work completed in the Southeast Region office. The Southwest Region headquarters also began to upgrade their systems in the fiscal year. Purchase of equipment and machinery increased by \$921,061 or 96.6%, due to the purchase of equipment for land management. Legal and specialized services increased by

GAME COMMISSION REVENUE \$66,983,503 FOR FISCAL YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2001



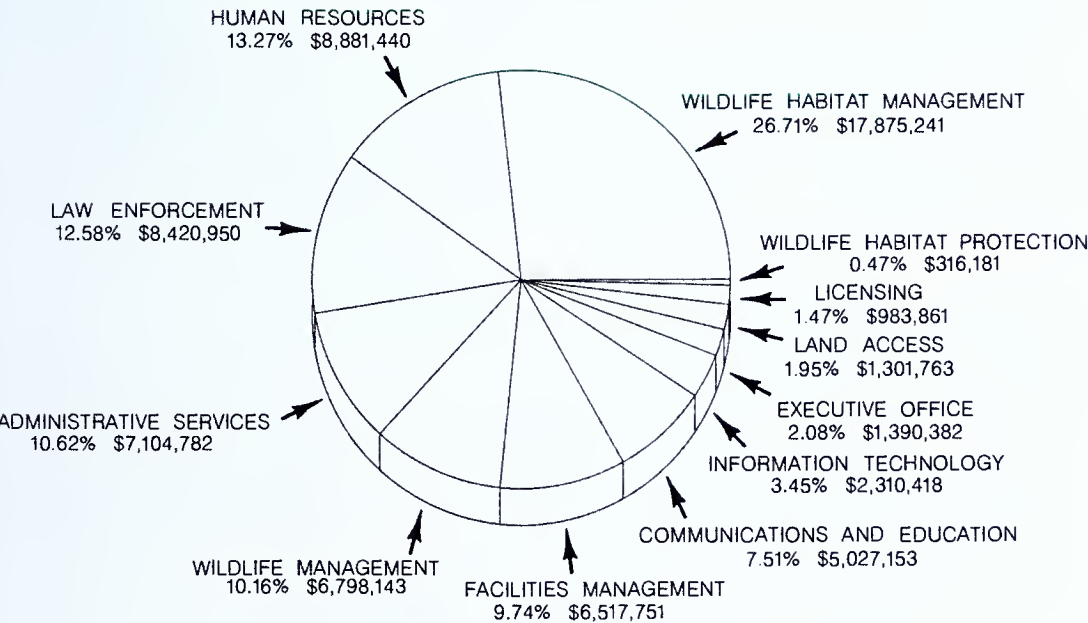
\$1,494,907, or 90.5 percent, due to an increase in services for habitat improvement and deer fencing.

Offsetting these increases was a decrease in radio and communications equipment purchases and contracted maintenance services of \$2,460,929. The commission's installation of a radio system in the west was finalized last fall and there was little activity this year. Educational supplies, literature and classroom training equipment decreased by \$362,766 or 46 percent.

Act 166 of 1998 further amended the Game Code sections relating to mandatory spending. The Game Code stipulates that a minimum of \$1.25 from each resident license for which the full fee has been paid and a minimum of \$2 from each antlerless deer license issued for which the full fee has been paid is to be used solely for habitat improvement and restoration conducive to increasing natural propagation of game or wildlife on all lands under the control or operations of the Commission, including lands enrolled in the Commission's public access programs and other public lands open to hunting under agreement with the Commission. The number of resident licenses sold during the 2000-01 fiscal year, as reported by the Game Commission, totaled 927,361. This mandated that a minimum of \$1,159,201.25 be expended for the above purposes.

The actual amount expended and committed during the fiscal year for these purposes, as provided by the agency was \$2,670,149, an excess of \$1,510,948 over the law's requirement. Antlerless deer licenses sold during the 2000-01 fiscal year, as reported by the Game Commission, totaled 814,891. This mandated that a minimum of \$1,629,782 be expended for the above-mentioned purposes. The actual amount expended and committed during the fiscal year for these purposes, as provided by the Commission was \$2,743,891, an excess of \$1,114,109 over the requirement. The code also states that a

GAME FUND EXPENDITURES
\$66,928,065
FOR FISCAL YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2001





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minimum of \$3 from each resident and nonresident license for which the full fee has been paid is to be used solely for habitat improvement and restoration conducive to increasing natural propagation of game on all lands under the control or operation of the Commission, including lands enrolled in the Commission's public access programs and other public lands open to hunting under agreement with the Commission. The number of resident and nonresident licenses sold during the 2000-01, as reported by the Game Commission, totaled 998,349. This mandated that a minimum of \$2,995,047 be expended for the above purposes. The actual amount expended and committed during the fiscal year for these purposes, as provided by the agency was \$5,060,163, an excess of \$2,065,116 over the law's requirement. The money collected for the above are now deposited into three separate restricted revenue and expense accounts in accordance with Act 166 of 1998. Expenses in excess of the funds collected are absorbed in the Game Commission operating executive authorization.

Game Fund Balance Sheet June 30, 2001

Assets

Cash with treasurer	\$605
Cash in transit	3,050
Cash-advancement accounts	11,168
Investments	34,106,000
Accrued interest receivable	121,382
Grants receivable – federal government	524,465
Due from other funds	201,000

Total Assets \$34,967,670

Liabilities

Vouchers payable	\$491,192
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	5,229,635
Due to other commonwealth funds	572,564
Due to other governments	150,715

Total Liabilities \$6,444,106

Fund Balance

Reserve for current encumbrances	\$1,908,393
Reserve for restricted receipts	30,284
Reserve for restricted revenue	148,672
Fund balance unreserved/undesignated	26,436,215

Total Fund Balance \$28,523,564

Total Liabilities and Fund Balance \$34,967,670

Game Fund Statement of Unreserved Fund Balance for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2001

Fund Balance - Unreserved/Undesignated, June 30, 2000 \$27,983,827

Reserve for restricted receipts, June 30, 2000	30,284
Reserve for restricted revenue, June 30, 2000	234,722

Add: Actual cash receipts July 1, 2000 through
June 30, 2001 \$66,983,503

Change in fair value of investments July 1, 2000 through June 30, 2001	51,000
Reversal of prior year change in fair value of investments	(79,000)
Revenue earned as of June 30, 2000 and deposited in 2000-01	(2,489,088)
Revenue earned but not received as of June 30, 2001	
Due from other funds	201,000
License & Fees, miscellaneous	3,050
Interest on short term investment	121,382
Due from Federal Gov't (Grants)	524,465
Total revenue accrued but not received as of June 30, 2001	<u>849,897</u>
Total revenue earned during '00-01	65,316,312
Lapses from prior year appropriations	<u>1,653,222</u>
Unreserved-Undesignated Fund Balance Before Commitments and Expenditures	95,218,367
Deduct: Current year expenditures and commitments posted from 7/1/00 - 6/30/01	66,928,065
Reserve for restricted receipts	30,284
Reserve for restricted revenue	148,672
Expenditure accruals as of 6/30/01	5,972,746
Commitments liquidated against 6/30/01 expenditure accruals	(4,586,630)
Reversal of prior year commitments and expenditure accrual	289,015
Total expenditures, commitments and reserves	<u>68,782,152</u>
Fund Balance-Unreserved/Undesignated, June 30, 2001	<u>\$26,436,215</u>

Schedule of Actual Revenue Deposited in Game Fund Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2001

Licenses and Fees

Resident hunting — adult	\$14,795,217
Resident hunting — junior	283,812
Resident hunting — senior	519,882
Resident lifetime hunting — senior	199,117
Resident Junior combination	344,577
Resident Senior lifetime combination	308,006
Nonresident hunting	6,319,352
Nonresident hunting — junior	103,714
Nonresident junior combination	36,010
Resident bear	1,487,473
Nonresident bear	93,528
Antlerless deer	3,999,870
Nonresident antlerless deer	568,326
Archery	4,006,442
Nonresident archery license	398,898
Muzzleloader hunting	1,301,345
Nonresident muzzleloader	128,237
Landowner hunting license	7,092
Nonresident 7-day hunting	91,174



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Resident furtaker license — adult	321,292
Resident furtaker license — junior	1,402
Resident furtaker license — senior	10,203
Senior lifetime furtaker license	249
Nonresident furtaker — adult	16,069
Nonresident furtaker — junior	160
Issuing agents' application fee	15,123
Special game permits	257,178
Right-of-way	441,097
Migratory game bird license	225,748
Nonresident migratory game bird license	25,690
Bobcat permit application	1,280
Elk license application	47,440
Transfer to general habitat improvement	(2,548,468)
Transfer to deer food and cover	(2,439,813)
Transfer to game species habitat improvement	(4,337,000)
Total Licenses and Fees	\$27,029,722
Fines and Penalties	
Game Law fines	\$1,503,040
Total Fines and Penalties	\$1,503,040
Miscellaneous Revenue	
Interest on securities & deposits	\$2,427,293
Sale of timber & other wood products	14,502,652
Ground rentals & royalties from oil and gas lease	1,230,963
Sale of <i>Game News</i>	802,401
Sale of coal	228,034
Wildlife promotional publications and materials	90,230
Wildlife nongame fund	117,492
Waterfowl management: stamp sales and art print royalties	41,988
Sale of skins	38,343
Other (game land map sales, sale of grain and hay, SPORT promotional publications, prior year expenditure refunds, sales tax and miscellaneous revenue)	276,818
Total Miscellaneous Revenue	\$19,756,214
Total Nontax Revenue	\$48,288,976
Restricted Receipts and Revenue	
Resident license fee — natural propagation of wildlife — general habitat improvement	\$2,548,468
Antlerless deer license fee — natural propagation of wildlife — deer food and cover	2,439,813
Transfer from game species habitat improvement	4,337,000
Total Restricted Receipts & Revenue	\$9,325,281
Augmentations	
Federal Aid	\$8,392,838
State augmentations (sale of vehicles, PA conservation corps, donations, PennDOT reimbursement)	976,408
Total Augmentations	\$9,369,246
Grand Total All Revenue in Game Fund	<u>\$66,983,503</u>

Expenditures and Commitments Current Operating Appropriations for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2001

Salaries and wages	\$32,442,043
State share employee benefits and training costs	9,736,839
Land purchases and acquisition costs	2,222,702
Printing and advertising	1,540,939
Automotive repairs, supplies, and rentals	1,478,694
Payments to local municipalities in-lieu-of-taxes	1,678,934
Maintenance and improvements of building, grounds, and machinery	2,472,077
Payments to other state agencies:	
Comptroller services rendered	358,920
Auditing services	176,150
Civil Service and Personnel services	93,107
Purchasing services	33,206
Checkwriting and Disbursement services	18,273
Pheasant feed	388,403
Wildlife habitat seedlings and plantings	85,397
Purchase of motor vehicles	1,617,265
Travel and special conference expenses	582,618
Radio and communications equipment purchases and contracted maintenance service	317,338
Telephone expenses	548,310
Postage	741,977
Heating, power and light	470,210
Legal and specialized services	3,145,960
Other supplies and services	1,231,016
Uniforms for Game Commission personnel	365,647
Office equipment, maintenance, rentals, and supplies	353,536
Purchase of equipment and machinery	1,874,693
Electronic data processing contractual services, rentals, and purchases	1,242,125
Educational supplies, literature, and classroom training equipment	424,441
Insurance - auto, liability, fidelity	152,440
Clinical services, laboratory and medical supplies	5,225
Payments to individuals for bear damage claims	6,829
Deer fencing	203,262
Payments to nonprofit institutions	97,140
Payments to institutions/individuals for research projects	46,676
Purchasing card expenses	689,623
Total Operating Commitments & Expenses	\$66,842,015
Other restricted expenses:	
Environmental assessment damage recoveries	86,050
Grand Total	<u>\$66,928,065</u>

Game Fund Expenditures and Commitments by Program Area July 1, 2000 through June 30, 2001

Executive office	\$1,326,808
Comptroller operations	358,920
Assisting other agencies	63,574



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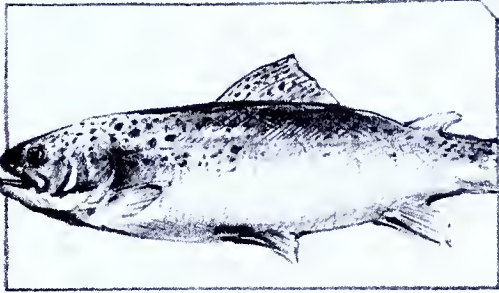
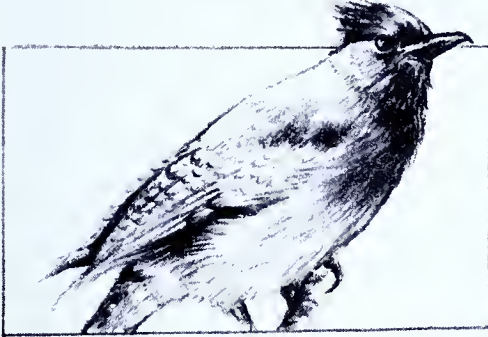
Public works program	499,018
General administration	4,505,001
Personnel costs	6,768,614
Warehousing	51,479
Agency purchasing	1,049,266
Auto acquisition, maintenance, credit card cost	587,099
Office maintenance and services	539,550
Training costs	2,112,826
Licensing program	983,861
800 telephone service	13,467
Information & Education admin. & planning	255,472
Public services	2,445,291
Publications	1,366,082
Hunter-Trapper Education program	532,720
Audio - Visual program	427,588
Wildlife Management program administration	1,101,510
Game farm operations	2,427,501
Wildlife research support services	904,658
Forest wildlife research program	1,474,639
Furbearer and farmland research program	205,197
Migratory game bird & waterfowl research program	369,341
Wildlife diversity research management program	303,396
C.A.R.A. activities	11,901
Law enforcement program management & planning	738,046
General law enforcement	7,442,543
General equipment maintenance	222,217
Endangered species & nongame law enforcement	18,144
Information systems	454,049
Data center operations	643,438
Computer mainframe application	499,220
Data communications networking	504,055
Desktop computing	209,656
Land management administration	5,729,905
Environmental review program	230,131
Land acquisition	5,040,353
Howard Nursery management	436,465
Herbaceous openings	2,060,053
Public access programs	1,301,763
Forest management	3,705,162
Food-producing improvements	903,303
Game lands construction & maintenance	5,768,016
Shooting range construction & maintenance	250,717
Total Operating Commitments & Expenses	\$66,842,015
Other restricted expenses :	
Environmental assessment damage recoveries	86,050
Grand Total	<u>\$66,928,065</u>

Pennsylvania Game Commission Schedule of Fixed Assets June 30, 2001

Land and land improvements	\$75,657,385
Buildings & building improvements	10,733,100
Machinery and equipment	12,944,391
Total Fixed Assets	<u>\$99,334,876</u>

Aficionados

of the



Woodlands

By Don Feigert

IN OUR MODERN WORLD where the grocery store is the most important link in the food chain and recreation often means sitting in front of an electronic machine, I call upon my fellow outdoor enthusiasts to join me in seeking to become aficionados of the woodlands.

So, how can we achieve aficionado status? The term means "someone who is passionate about something." We need to demonstrate that passion by getting out into the woods and onto the waters as often as we can: during the lush green of springtime, the bright light and warm breezes of summer, the red and yellow foliage under royal

blue skies of autumn, and the silent black-and-white of winter.

We must tell all who will listen what it means to wander ridges and hollows, alone and in a contemplative mood, and see our perceptions heighten. To pause along the trail, sit on a stump and watch gray squirrels perform their mast-gathering antics. To listen to birdsong on breezes, the groaning of old tree trunks, and the skittering sounds of small animals in the leaf litter. To let our shoulders relax. Our hands rest upon our knees. Our noses attune to the scent of humus on the

ground. To pick up a twig and navigate its textures with our fingertips.

The more aficionados enjoy the outdoors, the more they think and worry about its future. We must not take all of this natural beauty for granted or let the outdoor way of life become endangered during the 21 century. We must vow to do more to protect the outdoor experience from the ravages of commercial and urban development, and to pledge contributions towards purchasing land.

Aficionados enlist as soldiers in the war to protect and preserve the earth. They uphold the traditions of Theodore Roosevelt, Aldo Leopold and other pioneers in the history of the preservation of wildlife and wild places. They campaign for the opening of private holdings for public use, and then serve as watchdogs over how those properties are used.

A true aficionado may or may not be a hunter or angler and will, regard-

less, enjoy observing nongame species, from the porcupine to the garter snake, the monarch butterfly to the common bluejay, thriving in natural habitat. Aficionados who are hunters and fishermen understand that struggle and death among wildlife is a vital facet of the natural world. They respect prey and kill cleanly, with reverence and humility.

Some silently thank the animals they harvest for providing food.

Many in today's hunter/angler community think of themselves as conservationists, naturalists and stewards in the outdoors. Some outdoor voices now disdain references toward hunting and fishing as "sports" or "outdoor sports"

because that terminology trivializes what for some of us is a way of life and part of our being.

More and more outdoor enthusiasts now seek to transcend the traditions of competition and trophy hunting. Granted, the practice of selecting one "trophy" animal and pursuing it can sharpen a woodsman's skills and outdoor knowledge and appreciation.

And the passing up of fair and legal game in pursuit of a trophy can uplift the mind and heart of a hunter. But is it really important, one might ask, how a deer's antlers score in the Boone and Crockett record books? Does it truly matter who caught the most and biggest bass in a weekend fishing tournament? Every legal kill or catch is a "trophy," a testament to the health and well-being of the American outdoors.

Be aware that trophy hunting, with its popular notions of well-heeled sportsmen and their numerous and exotic specimens on the wall, can negatively influ-

More and more outdoor enthusiasts now seek to transcend the traditions of competition and trophy hunting.



ence the “good” hunter’s image with the public, including the public that votes on outdoor issues. And we must ask ourselves if competitive trophy yearnings might increase the temptation among the undisciplined minority to bend the rules and cut ethical corners. That’s an intolerable scenario in today’s era of public scrutiny.

Many outdoor aficionados now talk less about “limiting out,” voluntarily limiting the number of animals they harvest below what’s allowed by law, conserving the resource for others in the present and future. Instead, they crave communication on outdoor values, ethics, primitive ways, conservation, flora and fauna, ecology and natural history. They want to hear less about “how to score early on opening day,” more about appreciating a day (or week or weekend) in the outdoors. More about celebrating the joys and spiritual connections of hunting and fishing, less about tabulating points and pounds on bucks and bass. More about getting out there and less about getting something as a measure of success. So many aficionados treasure simply wandering out among wildlife, trees, rocks and streams, but so few speak or write about it with conviction. That needs to change.

Hunter/angler aficionados must live beyond reproach regarding outdoor ethics and respect for the written and unwritten laws of fair chase. We also need to police our own ranks to prevent bad behavior and bad publicity from damaging the integrity of outdoor pursuits. We must stand ready to deal with a segment of the population that considers us a ragtag mob of trigger-happy

violators motivated by bloodlust and greed.

Aficionados can influence the general, non-extreme public by inviting anti-hunters to join us in the battle against the true enemies of wildlife: urban sprawl, habitat degradation and pollution. We can publicize outdoorsmen’s contributions of time and money (two billion dollars in wildlife conservation funding since 1937 from the Pittman-Robertson Act alone) toward environmental causes, then challenge opponents to match those efforts instead of expending their resources on political persuasion.

We can talk simply and seriously about the values of hunting and fishing. To learn, to find quiet, solitary time in peaceful surroundings, to communicate with ancient inner music from deep within our own psyches, to take part in the food chain process in a real and environmentally beneficial manner, to share experiences with family and friends, to get close to nature, to participate in the outdoors without causing damage there, to educate, to pass along outdoor wonders as a legacy to future generations, to think on the fundamentals of living and dying things.

To become a true aficionado of the woodlands, wetlands and fields is a worthwhile lifetime goal. And that’s exactly what the outdoors will require from its participants, spokespersons and journalists in the future. □

CONTACTING THE REGION OFFICES

Northwest — 877-877-0299

Southwest — 877-877-7137

Northcentral — 877-877-7674

Southcentral — 877-877-9107

Northeast — 877-877-9357

Southeast — 877-877-9470

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.



Outside the Box

Penn's Woods Sketchbook/Bob Sopchick

LOOKING DOWN AT a city from the belly of a cloud we see a geometric grid pattern of city blocks defined by streets. Lower yet, from the height of a soaring hawk, the large squares of blacktopped parking lots and expansive roofs of buildings are distinct. Lower still, a crow passes over your suburban neighborhood, its shadow running up one side of your gabled roof and down the other. You sit within a rectangular room, on a rectangular chair, holding this magazine, reading these words that I typed on a square computer with its square keys.

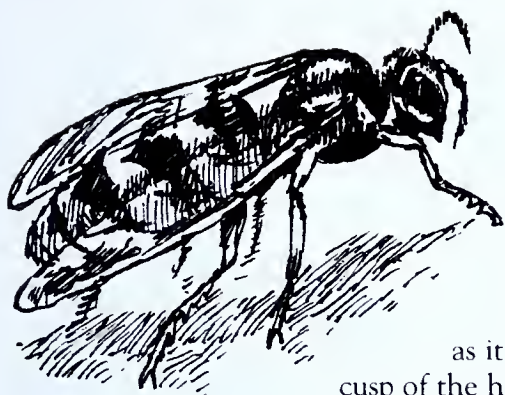


Look around the room and see the proliferation of right-angled forms — perhaps a calendar above a desk, a television, a fireplace. All around are boxes of all sizes, some filled with electronic gadgetry, with food, or even shotshells. Be it a billboard, bed or bus, the quadrilateral in two and three dimensions is the chosen form of modern living. From crib to casket, the visual measure of our lives lies in this practical form. This shape allows for precision in mass production with little waste, and is structurally strong. Cubes and multiples of cubes stack and fit together easily in various configurations, from cereal boxes on a shelf to condominiums on a hillside. The World Trade Towers, the focal point of the attacks of September 11, were monumental rectangles and icons of American might and ingenuity.

Within our increasingly compartmentalized world, the manmade environment aches for a touch of nature. It is not surprising that office workers in a sea of cubicles decorate their spaces with houseplants. What a delight a single tree is within a landscape of buildings, what a marvel is an errant stalk of chicory sprouting in the dusty detritus where curb meets macadam.

Some architects, furniture designers and interior planners realize that people need ties to nature and artfully employ the textures of stone, wood and leather, and sometimes the movement of light and water, into their designs.

People seek the solace of wild places in growing numbers every year, finding that once they are outside their box their spirit soars, as both mind and body are replenished by the wonders of a wild horizon.



THE SERPENTINE HOLLOW is filled with rising mist, and the creek far below trickles in fits and starts through clots of sodden leaves. I love this place. It is holy ground to me; a sanctuary for my spirit, a harbor for my dreams. The towering mix of oaks and beech, hemlock and poplar have not seen any logging for more than a century, nor will it ever, as it is part of a protected wild area. I stand on the cusp of the hollow, bow in hand, taking it all in.

When I first get back to the woods it is as if my eyes are portals to a black hole within me. Everything I see is sucked into this void where it's all condensed and is stored. Slowly then, that pit fills, until I am one with the woods, able to move about as a participant, not an observer.

My reverie is broken when I notice that my boots and legs are covered with buzzing yellow jackets. I stand stock still, expecting the stinging to begin at any moment. I've had two painful experiences before when I disturbed subterranean nests, and look for the quickest escape route. A nearby rotted log, ripped apart by a bear, blocks my front. The bear probably tore up the yellow jacket nest, too, as broken pieces of the hive are strewn about and I can see parts still under the ground.

The yellow jackets seem lethargic, so I back off slowly, a step at a time. They drone away, hovering over their broken nest. Examining a piece of the hive and its clusters of hexagonal cells I'm reminded that we are not the only creatures that live and work in geometric structures.

I FOLLOW A TRAM ROAD far into the uplands to the headwaters of the creek, and stop to eat a sandwich in the shadow of the sidehill. Opposite is a yellow hillside, radiant in the November light. Immense beech trees rise like marble columns supporting the perfect blue dome of a cloudless sky.

A flock of nine gobblers zigzag down the hillside, their prismatic plumage gleaming. They walk out to a point and I whisper, "Come back this way." The gobblers turn at a beech, obeying my command. This makes me smile and I watch them glean acorns, hopping up on logs and rocks as they feed on the abundant mast.

They angle away again, but lower now, long beards swinging side to side. I put my sandwich down and cluck twice on my slate call. They are in the gut of the hollow just below and I hear them cluck and rake. I stand among a veil of grapevines, ready to take the first gobbler that comes up onto the flat.

I wait, but all is silent. Where did they go? I walk over, ears straining. Nothing. I peek over, but they have seemingly vanished. I reason that they just filed up the dry gulch of the streambed and came out far above me. Fall gobblers are ultra wary, and ascending that steep embankment onto the open flat would be dangerous. I'll return in the spring, though, when fresh water and the booming gobbles of one of those big toms spills down the greening hollow.



LIKE YOGI BERRA SAID, "It's like déjà vu all over again." For two consecutive years I've been ready to draw back on a 6-point buck, only to have my fortune dashed by things outside my control. Last year's buck was only 15 yards away. I stood from my seat on a log as he made his way through a patch of ferns. He stopped and looked hard right at me, but as I studied his eyes I could see that he was looking at something just past my shoulder. Sure enough, an early morning hiker was walking by, 50 yards behind me, and I watched in fascination as the buck crouched down like a cat and slunk away, belly low, until he reached a thicket, then trotted off.

The 6-point of this year comes in behind me an hour before quitting time. When he quarters I start my draw but the buck shifts slightly and snaps to attention, then melts away into the choppings. A few seconds later two hikers descend a nearby trail.

Both times I was discouraged, but as I think about it now, the hikers never saw the deer, nor me, and I was privileged to see a whitetail doing what they do best.

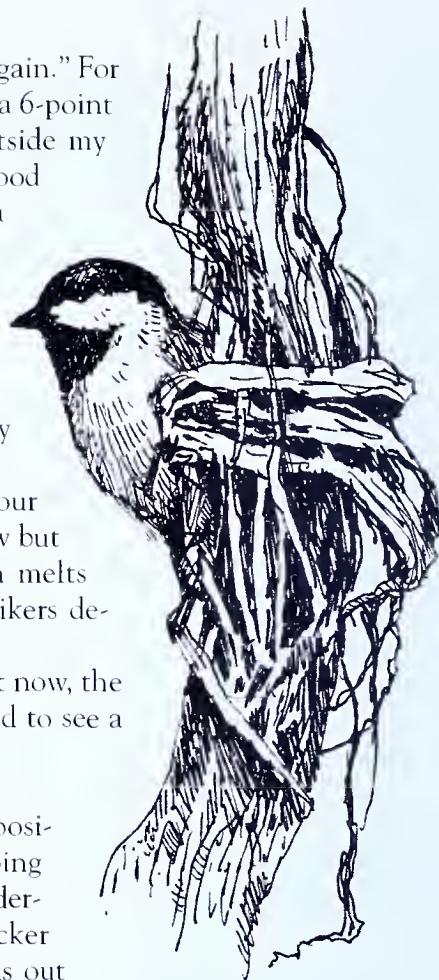
THIS IS THE BIG BOY, I think to myself from my position between the towering twin oaks. The buck is rubbing a tree, his head tilted far back. I'm looking at the underside of his rack, an arc of antlers thick as a bentwood rocker and every bit as graceful. The bruiser buck is 50 yards out but doesn't advance, then turns and heads downhill.

I move down the slope. He reappears later, farther down, tossing his antlers slowly in a knot of greenbriar and broken witch hazel branches above a scrape. He does this for minutes on end, totally engrossed. If the leaves were not so dry I would attempt a stalk. When a lone doe comes down the trail he chases her down the mountain. I examine the scrape and search for others, but can't locate any nearby that would reveal his travel pattern.

The next morning I freshen this scrape with doe urine, and set up in a windfall nearby. The wind is always fickle way up here, and when it rushes down the slope the buck charges up to the scrape. He is fired up, scooting about like a pup, and dashes around another windfall downwind of the scrape, shielded from me. I grunt and he trots to and fro, looking for a doe or another buck, but when he sees neither he takes off up the hill. I find another scrape 250 yards down the mountain, and on the third day of hunting him I will post there, as it's probably the first scrape he visits on his way up.

It rained briefly that night, and the next morning I walk silently to my stand. The moon through the mist is soft-edged and whorled — a single pale fingerprint on the window of night.

It is absolutely quiet, then I hear a sharp *crack!* Deer don't make sounds like that, I think. But there he is, 70 yards out, moving up the mountain. He is full of himself: thick-necked, stiff-legged, purposeful. I can sense the blood rushing in his body, can feel my own rushing in my ears. I grunt at him, but he plods on. When he was almost out of sight I grunt several more times, louder.



Ten minutes later I hear another sound behind me, and there he stands. My heart pounds, but I settle my buck fever repeating the mantra, "Where the mind goes, the body follows." He skirts a boulder and steps slowly around a treetop right into the center of my peep sight. My release is perfect, but my arrow strikes an unseen branch, veering forward, and the buck whirs and dashes away, unscathed. He stops to look about several times, and I watch him for a full 150 yards before he trots into a laurel thicket.

I pick up a few hairs that I clipped from his brisket, twirl them between my fingers and put them in my pocket. I believe this 17-inch 8-point is the 6-point I missed out on last year; there was something familiar about the oversized white patches around his eyes.

I hunt the second week of the rut in Greene County with friends Dave and Ed. Two more 8-pointers outfox me there. On the last day of archery I hunt with Ben and his father, Bud. I finally connect on a deer, which expired in the middle of the thickest blackberry patch in western Pennsylvania. It was an ordeal to get to the deer, and another getting it out. The doe I took in rifle season was easy, though, I pulled her straight down to my truck with one hand.

THIS WINTER I will work at my big rectangular drawing table beneath the expanse of square, frost-etched skylights. When I look up through the panes at the winter sky I often think of the woods, and can feel each remembered image loose itself from within and float away.

I see the great sweep of rock ledges, monuments to time itself, a place of bears and bobcats and ravens. I feel the big hollows brim with cold evening air and can hear the deer moving through, and I am so charged by this ancient shift that my very being lingers there through the night while I toss and turn, waiting for first light when I can join with it again. I see chickadees gleaning grapevines, and the bob and weave of busy squirrels, silver as frost. I see the arcing blackberry canes like purple slashes in the dark undergrowth and wonder how a deer can flow through that tangle.

I see veils of greenbriar and individual perfect ferns, and sassafras leaves on woodland pools and trails so cobbled with acorns it is difficult to walk. I see an endless network of spider gossamer, waving and billowing in the brilliant light and myriads of tracks rimming puddles on tram roads. I feel the cool, spongy comfort of an ancient log where I rest after a long, hot climb.

As I draw this buck that you see here, I hold in my left hand his brisket hairs. I can still see the highlight in his dark eyes, the startling white of his flared tail, the lustrous sheen of his coat, and I wonder if he will follow the writ of his kind next autumn in that same hollow. I know that I will.



FIELD NOTES



Uh-Oh!

CENTRE — I was wearing hip boots and a raincoat while checking hunters in a marsh on the first day of the early duck season when I ran into a hunter who I had checked earlier in the day. While discussing his lack of success, another hunter who I hadn't yet checked, walked up and told me to watch out for the game warden dressed like a hunter who pulls out his wallet and shows you his badge. I couldn't help but notice the grin on the one hunter's face when I pulled out my wallet and said, "like this." "Oh cripes" was his only reply.

— WCO ERIC L. SETH, BELLFONTE

Saved the Day

CAMBRIA — I responded to a call about an injured deer and was met by the Johnstown police and firefighters, who filled me in on the situation. It seems the deer had become wedged in an iron fence, and the rescuers obtained a Hurst Jaws of Life tool to free it. The deer was unsteady on its feet after being trapped so long, but soon it made its way into a nearby woods. Many thanks to the members of these fine departments.

— DEPUTY ERIN P. KABLER, JOHNSTOWN

Good Advice

McKEAN — I'd like to remind beaver trappers to thoroughly review the regulation changes for this season. For instance, the 15-foot restriction from placing traps near a beaver lodge or dam has been lifted in Furbearer Management Zone 3, but the regulation is still in place for the rest of the state.

— WCO THOMAS M. SABOLCIK, PORT ALLEGHENY

Brainy Bushytail

BUTLER/LAWRENCE — Traveling down a road one day I noticed a fox squirrel run to the edge of the road and stop, turn its head both ways, and then safely cross the highway. Now, wouldn't it be great if it could teach deer to do the same?

— WCO RANDY W. PILARCIK, PORTERSVILLE

Long Night

TRAINING SCHOOL — One night Elk County WCO Doty McDowell and I were responding to a call about shots being fired at deer from a vehicle, and were almost at the site when we got held up by a train at a crossing. Finally, after the train had moved on we got going, but then got a flat tire. By that time we had missed our chance of locating the suspects, so we headed for home. We decided to take a roundabout route back because there was less of a chance of having an elk dart out into the road, but then we had to slam on the brakes to avoid a bear.

— TRAINEE DAVID P. ALLEN, HARRISBURG

Just a Coincidence?

SUSQUEHANNA — On the first day of the regular small game season I noticed a rabbit sitting in the middle of a parking lot full of hunters' vehicles on SGL 236.

— WCO CHARLES ARCOVITCH, UNIONDALE

Beat Him to the Punch

BUTLER — While groundhog hunting my brother and I were pacing off a long shot I had made when he said suddenly, "look!" As we watched, a red fox darted out of a hedgerow and ran to the den hole, and then pulled out the groundhog I had just shot.

— WCO MARIO L. PICCIRILLI, RENFREW

Night Moves

LYCOMING — One night I was watching a field that poachers had been frequenting, when suddenly, out of the darkness, I heard the clash of antlers, as two bucks were squaring off. Their antlers made quite a racket and attracted a third much bigger buck that drove both of them off. Not only did I get to hear all of the action, I got to watch it, too.

— WCO JONATHAN M. WYANT, MONTOURSVILLE

Spry

CLARION — I hiked for four hours on the first morning of the general small game season, and although I found only three hunters, one of them really impressed me. This fellow had covered a fair amount of ground by the time I met him for the second time, and he obviously wasn't intimidated by rough terrain. He was just 80 years young, too. I hope I can hike like that when I'm his age.

— WCO ALAN C. SCOTT, NEW BETHLEHEM

Bonus

CUMBERLAND — The small game hunters who visited SGL 169 last season got a special treat. Many got to see a mature bald eagle staked out at one of the ponds, looking for a fish dinner.

— WCO EDWARD B. STEFFAN, NEWILLE

That'll Do It

TRAINING SCHOOL — A motel manager in Montgomery County wondered why his housekeeper ran screaming across the parking lot. Apparently, she had come face to face with the porcupine mount I had been using to do a program for a Boy Scout troop.

— TRAINEE JAMES P. MCCARTHY, HARRISBURG

Both Escaped

BRADFORD — My neighboring officer asked if I wanted to help remove a bear from a foothold trap, and I eagerly agreed. While in route, however, I began thinking about the dangers involved with this job. Not from the bear, mind you, but from making mistakes in front of my neighboring officer. You see, Bill Bower never leaves home without his pen and notebook, just waiting for a Field Note to happen. Well, we got the 65-pound cub out of the trap and on its way without incident. Sorry, Bill, maybe next time.

— WCO MATTHEW GREBECK, EAST SMITHFIELD



Just Imagine

I spotted a roadkilled buck in the median strip, just east of the Westmoreland Mall, so I turned around and went back to examine the animal. It had a 16-inch spread with 6-inch tines, but the size of the body is what impressed me the most. I didn't have a deer rack, so I called deputies Dean Smith and Frank Guerrier to assist. We hauled the deer to the region office where we weighed it on our bear scales, and it was a whopping 195 pounds. We aged the deer and discovered that it was only 18 months old. Could you imagine what the rack and weight of this deer would have been if it had lived two or three more years?

— WES JOSEPH V. STEFKO, SOUTHWEST REGION OFFICE, LIGONIER



Duped

NORTHAMPTON — Deputy Lou Rabenold suggested that I check a hunter standing at the end of a well maintained agricultural plot. The hunter turned out to be a full size scarecrow dressed in a fluorescent orange vest and hat, complete with a hunting license displayed in the middle of its back. We're not sure if this scarecrow actually kept crows away, but it sure did attract a WCO.

— WCO BRAD KREIDER, CHERRYVILLE

Right Idea

GREENE — Deputy Ed Smith and I were checking hunters when we met Kenny Hall from Dunbar, who was picking up trash on land he has permission to hunt on. Kenny told us he picks up a bag of trash every time he hunts the property. If more hunters did this, I wonder how many fewer "No Trespassing" signs there would be.

— WCO ROD BURNS, WAYNESBURG

Never Missed a Beat

FRANKLIN — Trainee Beth Fife was driving as we responded to a violation in progress. We were traveling west on Route 30 near Chambersburg when she asked if she should be in the left lane. I said that that would be better, considering we were riding on the berm. She quickly responded, saying that where she came from the berm of the roads aren't paved.

— WCO BARRY A. LEONARD, CHAMBERSBURG

Makes You Wonder

MONROE — After watching an individual road hunting for an entire day, we set up our mechanical deer to thwart the activity. The man drove past the fake deer five times, and on his last pass, stopped and took a photo of it. A short while later he was apprehended just three miles down the road for the unlawful killing of an antlerless deer. When asked about the mechanical deer, he said, "You guys don't think I'm that stupid to shoot that thing do you?" I guess not, but had he asked about his knowing a decoy operation was in full swing and still killing a deer after dark just a short distance down the road, I don't know that my answer would have been the same.

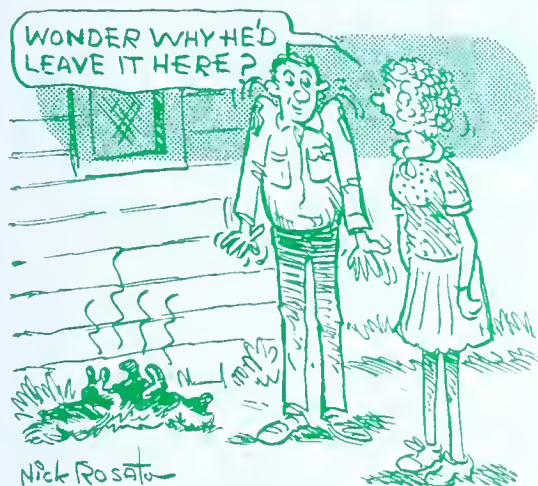
— WCO PETER SUGGENBACH, BLAKESLEE



Dancing With Bears

WCO David Carlini and I responded to a call about a bear caught in a leghold trap, and Dave used a catchpole to immobilize the bruin while I removed its paw from the trap. After the bear had been freed from the trap, however, we had another problem: Getting the catchpole noose off of it. Have you ever seen a WCO wrestle a 100-pound bear? I have, and it's on video, too. Don't worry, Dave, the video will be kept under lock and key at the region office.

— STEPHEN J. REPASKY, BIOLOGIST AIDE,
STATE COLLEGE



Keep it Quiet

ADAMS — Having a deputy who does not have a very good sense of smell is definitely an asset, especially when we get a call about a nuisance skunk. But, Ron, that skunk you left outside my garage was a bit much for my wife, and she asked that I tactfully mention it to you. Now, if you can somehow avoid mentioning to her that I asked you to leave it there.

— WCO LARRY D. HAYNES, GETTYSBURG

Double Play

ALLEGHENY — Deputy Tim Rooney and I were checking turkey hunters in North Fayette Township when Tim came across two lucky and proud hunters. Each had harvested a turkey and a coyote.

— WCO GARY M. FUJAK, CORAOPOLIS

Quick Thinking

JEFFERSON — Presenting a bat program to first graders at the Pinecreek Elementary School near Brookville has become a yearly Halloween tradition for me. This year, however, I had Trainee Gerald Kapral with me, and I forgot to mention to him that the kids do their homework on bats before the program. During Trainee Kapral's part of the program, one of the students asked where bats go when they have to go to the bathroom. Needless to say, none of them believed him when he answered, "To the bathroom."

— WCO ROGER A. HARTLESS, BROOKVILLE

Off-Roadin'

FULTON — In nearly three years here I've probably picked up about 1,000 roadkilled deer. It wasn't until I worked with Trainee Beth Fife, however, that I've learned how far a dead deer can fly off a rack when the right person is behind the wheel. I guess picking up a roadkill just once wasn't enough for such an enthusiastic trainee; she wanted to pick each one up several times.

— WCO STEPHEN A. LEIENDECKER, NEEDMORE

Drive-By Pheasants

TRAINING SCHOOL — After picking up crates of pheasants for stocking in Indiana County, WCO Pat Snickles, Deputy Bryan Bennett and I were driving down the road when Bryan said, "There goes a pheasant." It took a couple of more birds to realize that a crate door had jarred open and the birds had escaped.

— TRAINEE JASON L. DECOSKEY, HARRISBURG

Popular Read

YORK — I was at the York County District Attorney's Office when Deputy Sheriff Marc Kephart asked why I didn't have more Field Notes in *Game News*. I told him that I write them, but unfortunately they don't always make it in. Maybe we should ask the editors about adding another page. How about it, Bobs?

— WCO GUY HANSEN, RED LION

Good Advice

BERKS — Take a moment to remember those landowners who permitted you to hunt and trap on their land. Lending a hand with chores or a fruit basket will go a long way to ensure a place to hunt and trap next season.

— WCO DAVID BROCKMEIER, MOHNTON

Flunked that Subject

TRAINING SCHOOL — On my first day of field assignment with WCO Frank Dooley, as we sputtered to a stop in a game lands parking lot, he informed me that one of my duties would be to make sure our vehicle was filled with gas each day.

— TRAINEE CHAD R. EYLER, HARRISBURG

Beats a Que-Tip

TRAINING SCHOOL — Erie County WCO Darrin Clark must have the cleanest ears in the agency, because his faithful partner, Sarge, one of the Labs in the canine unit, often sticks his head through the cage and gives him a few licks on each ear. Come to think of it, my ears were clean by the end of the shift, too.

— TRAINEE BETH FIFE, HARRISBURG



Back-to-Back

Rob Cochran, of the Forest County Food and Cover Crew, reports that wood duck nesting usage is 65 percent higher in duplex-type nesting boxes. Since the entrance holes face in the opposite direction, maybe each duck thinks it's got the whole swamp to itself.

— LMO GEORGE J. MILLER, MARIENVILLE

Future Opportunity?

SCHUYLKILL — Bobcat populations are steadily increasing here, and during October there were two roadkills found in my district. Jeff Klinger from Tremont caught an adult male in his fox trap, and since Schuylkill County is in the part of the state that is closed to bobcat harvest, he asked for our assistance in releasing it. When we arrived we were greeted by most of the members of the Little Run Sportsmen's Club, who watched as we released the cat unharmed.

— WCO STEPHEN HOWER, PINE GROVE

Shock Value

MONROE — When Cory Bentzoni accepted a position as a deputy, he knew he would be involved in all sorts of situations involving wildlife. I'm not sure, however, that he expected to take a dip in a swimming pool in the middle of October to rescue a drowning deer.

— WCO MARK RUTKOWSKI, SWIFTWATER

Turnabout is Fair Play

BRADFORD — During the early antlerless deer season for junior and senior hunters, 88-year-old Ted Calkins killed a deer while hunting with his grandson. "Grandpa, I think I'm more excited now than when I killed my first deer," the boy said.

"I believe I was with you when you killed your first deer," Ted replied.

"Yes, you were," his grandson answered.

"Didn't I field-dress that deer?" Ted said.

"Yes, you did."

"Here's the knife, boy."

— WCO WILLIAM A. BOWER, TROY

Blackmail

BEDFORD — I haven't had a Field Note published in a while, but I think I resolved this situation when Trainee Ray O'Donnell and I checked a hunter on a game lands here during the early muzzleloader season. In return for us finally leaving him alone, so he could get back to hunting, *Game News* editor Bob Mitchell assured us our Field Notes would receive further consideration in the future.

— WCO DAN YAHNER, EVERETT

Stinky Situation

HUNTINGDON — Deputy Tim Hughes, who works as a security officer at Juniata College, noticed several new foreign students try to pet a skunk. He interceded and explained to the students the capabilities of a skunk, and they thanked him and said they were learning something new each day in America.

— WCO JOHN B. ROLLER, HUNTINGDON

Elk hunt a resounding success

PENNSYLVANIA'S first elk season in seven decades (November 12-17, 2001) saw 27 of the 30 license holders taking elk, as well as: the first elk harvested with a bow; the first elk harvested by a woman; and the first elk harvested by a hunter possessing a disabled permit.

Of the 27 elk, eight antlered and seven antlerless elk were harvested in Elk County, and six antlered and six antlerless were taken in Cameron County.

Isaac Ramer Jr. of Sunbury, Northumberland County, was the first to harvest an elk, a 4.5-year-old, 410-pound antlerless elk in Cameron County at 7 a.m. on the opening day.

The first bull was taken just five minutes later, by Michael Hoffman of East Greenville, Montgomery County. Hoffman — the first recipient of an elk license at the public drawing — got a 2.5-year-old, 451-pound bull in the Little Dents area of Elk County. It was a 5x5 with an antler spread of 25.5 inches.

"Saying that this year's elk hunt was successful is an understatement," noted Game Commission Executive Director Vern Ross. "Hunters did a fantastic job of collecting the various samples — such as blood, tissue and organs — which we requested of them. This data will enhance the volume of information we have gathered over the years about the health of our elk herd.

"From my conversations with hunters, I certainly believe that this

opportunity was appreciated and enjoyed. Hunters can attest that the vast majority of Pennsylvania's elk are not habituated to humans, and do provide challenging hunting."

Before receiving their elk hunting license or elk guide permit, all participants were required to attend an orientation program on November 11. Nearly three hours, the program covered the elk herd; elk anatomy; hunter ethics, safety and rules of the hunt; field-dressing and field care of the meat and cape; and directions to the elk check station.

All 30 license recipients and four alternates were present for the program, but only 30 licenses were issued. Also, of the 157 individuals who applied for an elk guide permit, only the 122 who were present for the orientation program were issued permits.

Fourteen of the 15 antlered elk license holders got an elk, and 13 of the 15 antlerless license holders got one. Also, of the 27 hunters who got an elk, 25 used a guide.

After the mandatory 60-day drying time, the Game Commission will offer to score each of the antlered elk for Pennsylvania's big game records, as well as for Boone & Crocket and Pope & Young consideration.

Prior to the hunt, the elk herd was estimated to be around 700. For more information about Pennsylvania's elk herd, visit the Game Commission's website (www.pgc.state.pa.us), click on "Wildlife" then choose "Elk in Pennsylvania."

On the first day, four antlered and four antlerless elk were taken; on the second, three antlered and two antlerless; on the third, three antlered and three antlerless; on the fourth, three antlered and one antlerless; on the fifth, one antlered and two antlerless; and on the sixth day, one

antlerless elk was killed.

Based on the harvest, Ross noted that there would not be an extension of the elk season. He also pointed out that the Game Commission's Bureau of Wildlife Management currently is preparing the details for a proposed 2002 elk hunting season.

Information sought in three illegally killed elk

PGC Northcentral Region Director Barry Hambley is asking for help in apprehending the person or persons responsible for illegally killing three elk in Clinton and Elk counties last September and October.

The first elk was found in a food plot on SGL 321 in Keating Township, Clinton County, on September 29. According to WCO John Wasserman, it appears the elk was shot between September 20 and 29. "The animal was a radio-collared 800-pound bull with a 5x9 rack, and was shot several times," Wasserman said. "No part was taken."

Local residents found the remains of a second elk, along Muenster Road, two miles from St. Marys on October 21. According to WCO Doty McDowell, it appears this elk was killed between October 12 and 15. "It appears that this animal was a bull, as the skull plate was removed,"

McDowell said. "It also appears that some meat was taken. There have never been any elk in the Sugar Hill area of St. Marys, which leads us to believe that this elk may have been killed somewhere else and the remains just dumped here."

The third elk, also being investigated by McDowell, was found by a local resident in Jay Township, just east of Caledonia, along Route 555. This elk was believed to have been shot and killed on October 19 or 20. "This carcass was intact except the antlers," McDowell said.

If convicted, those responsible face penalties of \$800 per elk, as well as possible replacement costs, which range from \$5,000 – \$10,000 per elk. Anyone with information about these killings should contact the Northcentral Region Office at 1-877-877-7674. Any information will be kept confidential.

"Crossings," new *Game News* column

THIS MONTH'S issue marks the beginning of a new *Game News* column, "Crossings." Appearing on page 64, "Crossings" will contain thought-provoking essays about hunting, nature and, well, we'll just have to wait and see.

This month features "A Gamebird's Flush," by Chuck Fergus, a *Game News* contributor for many years, no doubt remembered by many readers for his "Thornapples" column that ran from the mid-1970s to the early '90s.

In coming months, "Crossings" will feature the writings of Ben Moyer, Bob Sopchick — who will also be illustrating every month's column — and Scott Weidensaul.

Ben Moyer has been a prolific writer and editor, perhaps best known for his work in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette and *Pennsylvania Sportsman* magazine. Bob Sopchick, too, has been contributing to *Game News* for many years, as an artist and, in recent

years, author of the "Penn's Woods Sketchbook." Finally, we're pleased Scott Weidensaul is contributing to "Crossings." Scott is an award winning nature writer with more than 20 books to his credit, along with many articles in national nature magazines.

With "Crossings" now on our back page, "In the Wind" has been moved to immediately following the News section and has been renamed "Off the Wire."

PGC Retirees



William L. Elliott
Dispatcher
Northwest Region
Townville
6/1/88-8/3/01



Glenn H. Arnold
Surveyor 1
Bureau of Land
Management
Newport
8/9/65-2/16/01



Elwood (Butch) L. Camp, Jr.
WCO, Potter County
Northcentral Region
Ulysses
7/12/75-7/20/01



George F. Mock
WCO Centre County
Northcentral Region
Spring Mills
3/28/70-3/30/01



Leo C. Yahner
WCO, Venango County
Northwest Region
Franklin
3/25/68-3/30/01

ALSO RETIRING were Donald DeArmitt, Game Lands Maintenance Worker, Pleasant Gap, 6/15/71-3/30/01; Kristy A. Noble, Clerk Typist 3, Grantville, 9/18/73-7/20/01; William D. Overcash, Game Lands Maintenance Supervisor, Tobyhanna, 4/29/78-10/16/01; Gary Packard, WCO Law Enforcement Coordinator, Bureau of Law Enforcement, Millersburg, 3/28/70-7/6/01; Samuel R. Roth, Game Lands Maintenance Worker, Fountainville, 6/25/74-3/30/01; Silas Sweet, Game Lands Maintenance Worker, DeLano, 11/16/64-3/30/01; and David Zimmerman, Game Lands Maintenance Supervisor, Cressona, 10/11/66-8/3/01.



Off the Wire

by Bob D'Angelo

IOWA

Iowa's most popular game bird was actually introduced to the state by accident in 1901, when 2,000 captive pheasants escaped from a private game breeder near Cedar Falls.

WISCONSIN

All 400 of the wild white-tailed deer sampled during the fall 2000 hunting season in Wisconsin tested negative for bovine tuberculosis and chronic wasting disease. However, eight percent of the deer did test positive for leptospira, a water-borne bacteria affecting mammals.

NORTH DAKOTA

In 2000, hunters in North Dakota had success rates of 89 percent for moose, 49 percent for elk, 100 percent for bighorn sheep (only four permits were issued), and 74 percent for white-tailed deer.

SHOOTING

A survey last spring by the National Shooting Sports Foundation revealed that 77 percent of Americans believe firearms have a legitimate place in modern society, which is up five percent from the last survey conducted in 1999.

WISCONSIN

Wisconsin farmers received \$1.4 million in damage payments in 2000 for crop losses caused by deer, bears, wild turkeys and geese. In 1999 payments reached \$1.3 million.

WYOMING

There were seven hunting related incidents, including the first fatality since 1998, in Wyoming last year — up from three incidents in 1999.

FLORIDA

The Florida panther population is now estimated at 60 to 70 animals. Twenty years ago there were 30.

TRAPPING

Legislation to ban or greatly curtail trapping in Maryland, Rhode Island and Oregon has been introduced. Colorado, Arizona and New Jersey have legislation in place banning or severely restricting trapping, and complaints concerning nuisance furbearers have risen significantly.

GREAT BRITAIN

The House of Lords in the British Parliament rejected legislation passed by the House of Commons that would have banned fox hunting and other hunting with dogs. The Lords also rejected a so-called Middle Way option that would have allowed hunting to continue subject to outside inspection.

Another View

By Linda Steiner

Canine companions have much to offer a hunter, but sometimes they're nothing but . . .

Doggone Troubles

I'VE NEVER MET A DOG in the woods that I didn't like, but that's not the problem. The problem is that they always like me back. I wouldn't trade one of these pooches that become my instant friend-for-life, or at least until the end of the hunting day, for one that growled and snapped. The reason they all seem to take to me is that I try to make sure they're friendly by showing them that I'm friendly, in case they're the suspicious kind. Instead of simply giving me a wag of the tail and politely sniffing my hand, and then going back to the farmhouse or their hunter/owner, they make me part of the family.

One of my first "dog-scapades" was with a well-groomed husky that decided to share my archery hunting ground blind one morning. Because it wouldn't leave and seemed so contented with my company, I finally encouraged it to stay, rather than roam and chase the deer from my nearby hunting companions. No sense in all of us having our morning ruined.

Then there was the old beagle that latched onto me as its hunting companion. Even when I left the game lands food plots and the abode of rabbits and pheasants, it plodded up the mountain with me, perhaps figuring it wouldn't mind a turn as a squirrel dog. Eventually I returned to the fields and found the owners calling. It went back reluctantly.

And then there was the black Lab-mixture in buck season, which I met when he

chased a bushytail up the tree I was sitting against. He decided to forego squirrel harassing in favor of napping in my lap. Though I got up and walked off, I had made the "mistake" of petting him. He kept near me until afternoon, when another hunter did what I wouldn't — gave him a sandwich. Later I saw him sleeping off his adventure, or his full belly, on his owner's porch.

Sure, I could have gotten angry at these dogs, yelled and threatened with a stick, frightened them away from me. But I just can't be mean to a nice dog. Though dogless, I'm a dog person at heart, having grown up in the mutually fond company of beagles. My first instinct is to get on good terms with any dog I meet and, apparently, that is how most dogs respond to me. Although the dogs I've met in the woods have ruined my hunts, in some ways they made my days.

My most recent canine-encounter was with a setter I'll forever think of as "Bell," because that's what I heard first and at all too frequent intervals throughout the day. Bird dogs have great natural scenting ability for anything with feathers. This works fine if the dog is yours and you're in tangled timber after grouse or in weed fields for pheasants. It's not great if you're a turkey hunter and you don't know, don't want and can't use the dog that has adopted you (hunting turkeys with a dog is illegal).

Opening day of this past turkey season

was going strangely anyway, with two inches of snow on the ground and Arctic temperatures after a week of summer-like swelter. The overnight snow meant any turkey tracks seen had to be fresh. In early afternoon I found myself on a game lands between an acorn-rich oak woods, dark hemlock cover, and a regrowing timber cut. I decided to take the .218 Bee rather than the 12-gauge, because I knew some spots where I could watch open woods, plus I just like light-caliber scoped rifle shooting.

Walking along the grassy lane, I saw turkey tracks that emerged from the hemlocks, but then they reentered. The birds must still be in there, I thought. I set up to call below the lane, taking off my orange hat and vest and wrapping an orange band around a nearby tree. I yelped a while, expecting a turkey to appear under the evergreens below me. I thought I heard one, but I wasn't sure. Then I heard an odd noise above me. Scanning right, I saw a motion over my shoulder. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw a dark-feathered neck and pink and blue head of a turkey, close. The bird saw me, too. Before I could turn around, with the wrong gun anyway, it lifted heavily into the air. I watched it sail over the cut toward the next wooded point. I mentally kicked myself and kept calling.

Time passed and nothing. I returned to the grassy lane and eased out the path to a fork. The left-hand branch traversed the cut; the other paralleled it uphill. I had just started left when I heard *tinkle-tinkle-tinkle, tinkle-tinkle-tinkle*, coming toward me from the other way. I turned to see a belled, tan and white setter stop suddenly and stare at me.

In the years I was around dogs, I learned a little something about canine commu-

nication — mainly that body language is everything. Was this dog friendly or was it going to bark and try to bite? The setter had a quizzical, "I'm-not-sure-about-you" look and all four feet planted squarely. I spoke softly, "Hi there, fella. What's the matter?" When it didn't move, I turned and walked slowly away.

Tinkle-tinkle-tinkle, tinkle-tinkle-tinkle. The dog started toward me. I had no intention of being nipped from behind. I turned again and the dog stopped, closer now. "What ya doin' here fella, where are your people?" I said soothingly. I bent from the waist, extending my open hand at dog level. I had to make sure this was a kindly pooch and not a sneaky pants seat ripper. The setter walked up gingerly, sniffed my outstretched fingers, and let me pat its head. Good, I thought. The dog knows I'm not a threat and it'll go back to its owner. It actually did turn into the clearcut to hunt again.

While standing there, I heard a turkey yelping in the hemlocks just below my last

Bob Steiner



DOGS are great for hunting most gamebirds, when it comes to hunting turkeys, dogs are the last thing a hunter would want to have around.

calling position. I'd had more than one bird coming in and didn't know it. What to do now? I couldn't call the turkey to the rifle through the dense growth of the timber cut. With the setter gone, I hurried back down the trail to the edge of the evergreens and set up again. The turkey was really talking below me, coming fast to my ersatz clucks. I put down the call and steadied the rifle on my knees. For an instant a turkey filled an opening below me, then disappeared behind some downed trees. I could hear the bird veering to my right. I had just picked up the call again, when I heard another sound.

Tinkle-tinkle-tinkle, tinkle-tinkle-tinkle. With a happy rush the setter was on, over and around me, ecstatic at finding its lost "pal." Before I could shush or stop it, the dog flashed downhill. First it flushed a grouse I hadn't seen, then the turkey that, until scant moments before, had been so close as to be a sure thing. The bird flapped above tree level and set its wings for far climes. The setter came charging back, jumping at me and licking my hands and face, saying, "How about that, Boss? Good job, huh?"

The dog ran off into the hemlocks and I thought, Oh sure, go chase away any other turkeys that were there, too. I stood up and shook my head. Such is fate; whadda-ya-gonna-do? I walked up to the grass lane. Since the setter had left, maybe I'd follow up the first turkey I had seen. It didn't seem that spooked. I crossed through the cut toward the big trees on the point. I found a setup site, facing down the slope, and settled in to call.

From below I thought I heard a yelp. I called again. Was that another yelp? *Tinkle-tinkle-tinkle, tinkle-tinkle-tinkle.* The setter was back, without hesitation, right to me. With an overjoyed wag, it leaped onto my lap. I pushed it off. "Quiet. Go away," I whispered. I was still hoping against hope the dog would leave before this turkey was scared off. The setter sniffed a circle around me and took off

again — toward where I'd heard the last yelps.

I got out of there, fast. I decided that if I put some distance between us, the setter might abandon me and go find its owner. I hiked quickly down the lane, toward the car. No dog bell sounded. I slowed. Still no tinkle. Maybe my plan had worked. Maybe I wouldn't have to leave. Maybe I could try one more calling spot.

I cut off the trail and set up about 100 yards into the woods. The only sounds were chickadees and a little breeze in the evergreen boughs. I yelped. A yelp in return. Yes! There were still turkeys down over the hill, and no setter in sight.

Then I heard it above me, faintly. I could follow the progress. Along the path, then off the path and headed my way. *Tinkle-tinkle-tinkle, tinkle-tinkle-tinkle.* I held still and hoped the dog wouldn't see me. It stopped, puzzled, and then circled downwind, scent tracking. It hit my scent line and came bounding upstream, so glad to locate me that I could hardly be mad. This time it not only tried to climb onto my lap, but get inside my unbuttoned coat. Then it sat down next to me, pleased with the world. "Missed me, didn't ya, didn't ya?" its laughing eyes said. It looked downhill, cocked its ears, and took off again. I got up.

I knew how to cure the problem. I had to break my scent trail. I walked back to my vehicle. The setter reached me about the time I got to the Jeep. "If you hang around the parking area, your owner will find you," I said to the dog as I got in. Besides, several houses and farms were nearby. I drove to another part of the game lands a lot farther up the hill.

No turkeys answered in the places I called now, and I gradually worked my way back toward the car. Toward quitting time I sat under evergreens, watching a young deer in the open hollow to my left, feeding on acorns. I decided not to stay until the last minute and just reached to turn my hat back to orange, when I thought I

heard a *fwop, fwop*. Was that turkey wings or just the sound of the cap against my head?

Tinkle-tinkle-tinkle, tinkle-tinkle-tinkle, yipe-yipe-yipe!

Putt-putt-putt, flap-flap-flap!

Yipe-yipe-yipe!

The setter rushed down the hollow, chasing a turkey to flight and panicking the deer.

“Now that’s a perfect end to the day!” I said out loud. “What else?”

As I stepped from the cover of the hemlocks into the oak woods, from above me came the finishing touch. *Whoosh-whoosh-whoosh*. Directly overhead, the turkey I’d

heard go to roost (but hadn’t recognized the sound), busted out of the treetops. As at the start of the afternoon’s misadventures, I had the wrong gun. From below, but headed inexorably uphill, I could hear the setter’s bell.

After returning to my vehicle, I met a grouse hunter in a pickup truck, who was obviously looking for something. I took a guess. “Your setter will be here in a couple of minutes,” I told him. He moved down the trail to whistle for it, but I knew that was hardly necessary. As to my turkey hunting, the following week I called in and shot a jake with my rifle, sans setter “assistance.” □

Fun Games — By Connie Mertz

Birding from the Backyard Feeder

Copy the letters ONLY to the birds that winter here in Pennsylvania in the space provided at the left.

_____ Tufted Titmouse (F)

_____ Cedar Waxwing (S)

_____ Pine Grosbeak (O)

_____ Starling (R)

_____ Gray Catbird (T)

_____ American Goldfinch (S)

_____ Northern Cardinal (N)

_____ White-winged Crossbill (W)

_____ Hummingbird (V)

_____ Killdeer (A)

_____ Downy Woodpecker (E)

_____ Eastern Phoebe (B)

_____ Snow Bunting (L)

_____ Blue Jay (U)

Copy the letters and unscramble

Clue: Seeds used in backyard feeders

answers on p. 62

Fangs, claws and talons attached to “winged death” are a natural part of the wild. The upper echelon of the food chain is always fascinating to watch, but more so, it seems, when the snow flies.

Watching Winter Predators

DURING WINTER we are all in it together — the birds and other wild animals that choose to tough out the season here, and my husband Bruce, our son Dave, and I. Wild animals and humans alike must have enough food to stay alive and healthy, and adequate shelter from cold and wind. For us humans, it is relatively easy most of the time. With frozen and canned food, heating oil and insulated houses, we are nourished and warmed. We can even choose to put on warm clothes and boots and go outside every day.

For animals, it's not so easy. Many lose the struggle to survive the winter. Hunger also makes them bold and easier to watch, especially the usually wary predators. Take sharp-shinned hawks, for instance. Every winter at least one stakes out our feeders, making frequent raids whenever the weather is especially cold and snowy. Because they are juveniles, they rarely kill anything. In fact, studies show that less than half of all immature sharpies survive their first winter.

Last winter, though, the sharpie that visited our feeders was a bold and skilled hunter. Judging from its size and coloring,

it was a mature female. She first appeared on December 9. Juncos crowded our back porch and steps that cold clear day, and then, suddenly, they were gone. There, sitting on the ground below the back steps, was the “blue darter,” and she did, indeed, have a bluish-gray cast to her back in the early morning light. When she saw me looking out at her, she flew to a weed head, landed, flared her tail, and took off without a meal.

Goodness knows how many more times she returned when we were not looking, but by December 22, three inches of snow covered a layer of snowy-ice, the wind blew, and the thermometer plummeted to the single digits. In mid-afternoon Dave shouted, “The sharpie nabbed a junco.”

I rushed to my study window and watched as she plucked and ate her victim on the ground below the back porch. She scattered the feathers, ate the head, pulled out and consumed the entrails, and quickly finished up the remains. I could almost hear her smacking her bill. She then flew up into a nearby tree, shook her long, banded tail, and flew off.

The following day it was five degrees

at dawn and small birds mobbed the feeders and porch floor, eager to stoke up after the bitterly cold and windy night. At 9 a.m. I glanced outside. Not a bird was to be seen. The killer extraordinaire had struck again. This time she plucked her junco victim even closer to our windows, but when she saw us watching, she picked up the remains in her talons and flew into the woods.

She showed up again after lunch, sitting in a tree below the feeders, preening and shaking her tail. I went out to chase her, figuring that one junco a day was enough. She, on the other hand, didn't want to leave. She flew toward our front porch, swerving, I thought, around the 10-foot-high juniper tree outside our bow window. I stepped out on to the porch and peered around the side of the house at the tree. She sat hidden in its prickly midst, but she flew away when she realized I had spotted her.

The next day, at 12:10, I returned from a walk and glanced out the bow window to see the sharpie plucking and eating still another junco on the same clump of weeds she had favored during previous raids. This time, after she finished, she perched on a horizontal weed stem, picked her feet clean, and then sat there as the wind ruffled her feathers. She looked like she was perfectly at home as she glanced around comfortably before finally leaving.

She was back at 3:30 on December 27, but this time the birds escaped. She also

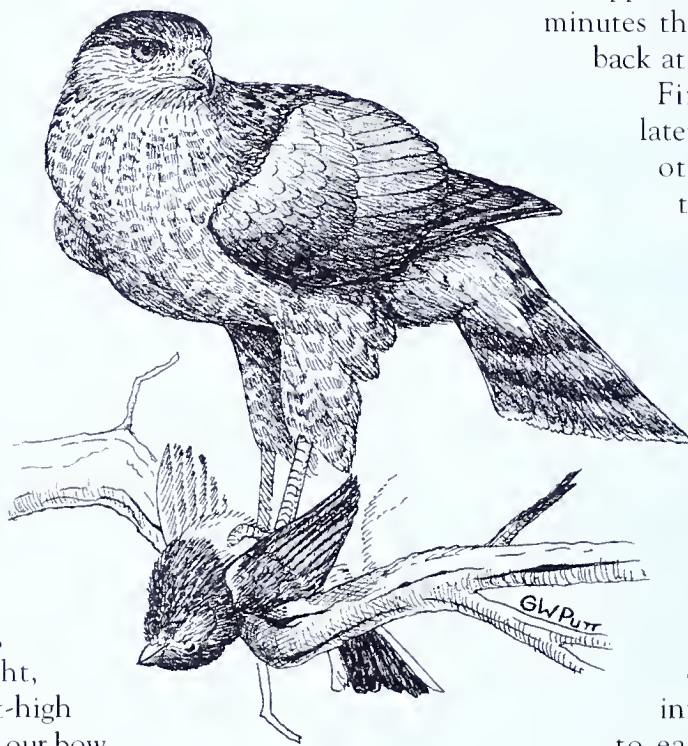
missed on the last two days of the month. Then, shortly after 2 o'clock on January 5 I heard a thud against the bow window. The sharpie had again missed her target and sat on a tree branch outside my study window for several minutes. Then she flew into the juniper tree where the juncos were hidden, but she didn't catch any. Finally, she flew to the edge of the woods and disappeared. In a few minutes the birds were back at the feeders.

Fifteen days later, I heard another thud at the bow window in mid-afternoon.

The sharpie grabbed a junco that had flown into the window in a panic and carried it off into the woods to eat. That was the last we saw of her.

Four meals, four misses in less than a month — the highest number of kills, by far, that we had ever witnessed, but certainly not enough to keep a female sharpie alive. Her fate, like that of so many of the animals we watch during the winter, remains a mystery.

But snow does help solve the mystery of what animals are around and how they are doing. Last winter I found the usual tracks — porcupine highways in and out of the spruce grove; deer, ruffed grouse and wild turkeys along our trails; and squirrels, voles and mice throughout the woods. Coyote tracks were also common, and I knew they had raised a family on our property the summer before. I easily found the



smaller, neater tracks of gray foxes, but I wondered if coyotes had eliminated our red fox population, as biologists claim happens when coyotes move in.

On January 22, in five inches of new snow, I followed two sets of coyote tracks all over the Far Field, where red foxes had always lived. They were classic coyote tracks, between two and two-and-a-half inches long with distinctive toenail marks and heel pads. I saw where the coyotes had sniffed at the bases of trees and poked their heads under blowdowns. Neither burrow I knew of had tracks going in and out, but above Pennyroyal Trail, the tracks converged on a hole beneath an uprooted tree.

Later, as we sat in the kitchen, I looked out across First Field at Sapsucker Ridge and, against the revealing blanket of white, I spotted what looked like a red fox trotting down the ridge.

"Get my binoculars, quick!" I told Bruce and Dave as I kept my eyes glued on the moving animal. Through my binoculars I could see that it was a large red fox. Unlike most red foxes, however, it had black along its back and tail as well as on its legs, which made it a cross red fox, according to a color photograph in J. David Henry's book, *Red Fox: The Catlike Canine*. Because of its size, I assumed it was a male.

As we watched from the veranda, it reached the edge of the field and sat down next to a large tree where it groomed its tail and chest before moving back up into the thickets. After a few minutes, it reappeared, trotting along the side of the hill, behind a fallen log, and into thick brush near the powerline right-of-way.

Although red foxes are primarily nocturnal hunters, in the winter they are more likely to hunt during the day as well as in

the night because prey is harder to catch. Excited by the sighting, I waited nearly an hour to give it a head start before setting out to track it.

Following up the edge of the woods along the right-of-way, it crossed about halfway up Sapsucker Ridge. On the other side it had sniffed around an uprooted tree before continuing into the Sapsucker Ridge woods and then back down into the grapevines and American bittersweet hanging from the trees along the edge of First Field. From there it had meandered the field border for a couple hundred feet before turning up the hillside into the woods.

Its tracks were nearly as large as those I had seen at the Far Field, but because red foxes have a lot of hair growing on the bottoms of their feet, they were blurry and the toenail marks were not visible. But I could see its distinctive heel pads, which were shaped like an inverted V.

Halfway up the slope it turned left and continued straight ahead for several hundred feet before swerving right and going up to the top of the ridge. At the top it headed toward the vernal ponds, but then veered toward the top of First Field, staying well within the woods, even at the corner of the field beyond the spruce grove. There it looked under an uprooted tree with a nice cavity below.

Finally, it turned left, putting its tracks precisely into the oval-shaped grooves made by porcupines that led into the spruce grove. Then I lost the tracks in a maze of deer tracks. It was as if it had simply vanished. Or had the fox realized that I was tracking it and deliberately threw me off the trail? Whatever the case, I was jubilant to learn that at least one red fox still roamed our property.

*We never know what
we'll see when we look
out our windows in
winter. But we know it's
the best of times for
predator watchers such
as us.*

Probably our most thrilling predator sighting occurred back on January 13, 1999. It was a particularly dismal day — 27 degrees and raining. But in mid-afternoon our son, Dave, stepped out on the guesthouse porch and spotted a least weasel hunting voles near the springhouse. He rushed over for a closer look as the weasel ran through the dried goldenrod stalks to the old well behind the springhouse and disappeared into a vole burrow. Then he alerted his brother Mark, who was visiting, and while Mark kept an eye on the burrow entrance, Dave ran up to the house to tell me about the weasel.



In the meantime, Mark saw first the vole, then the weasel, zip out of the burrow. The weasel chased the vole up the slope, where we caught a glimpse of it just as it disappeared down another vole burrow near the juniper tree outside the bow window. Although we watched that entrance, we didn't see the weasel again. It probably had caught its victim.

Because least weasels are primarily nocturnal and highly secretive, few people have seen them at any time of the year. For that reason, they are classified as an "at risk" or "status undetermined" species in Pennsylvania. The smallest carnivores, least weasels are only slightly larger than meadow voles, their preferred prey. Most least weasels in northern Pennsylvania turn white in winter, while in central and western Pennsylvania they are usually pale brown, as was the one we watched.

Their elongated bodies are aptly suited for chasing voles through their runways, and like other weasel species, they are ef-

ficient killers.

What had been a dull day had certainly been brightened by our close encounter with a least weasel. Like our sighting of the red fox and our visits from the sharpie, we never know what we will see when we look out our windows in the winter. But we know it's the best of times for predator watchers such as us. □

Books in Brief

(Not available from the Game Commission.)

Field Dressing and Butchering Deer, by Monte Burch, The Lyons Press, 246 Goose Lane, P.O. Box 480, Guilford, CT 06437, www.lyonspress.com, 160 pp., hardcover, \$19.95 plus \$4.50 shipping & handling. Long-time hunter Monte Burch uses detailed instructions clarified by illustrations to explain eviscerating, skinning, butchering and cooking the deer carcass. The book also offers all kinds of recipes, from simple venison burgers to more complex venison pie and even barbecuing suggestions.

Grouse Hunting Strategies, by Frank Woolner, The Lyons Press, 123 West 18 Street, New York, NY 10011, 168 pp., \$24.95 plus \$4 shipping & handling. Frank Woolner was one of America's most respected outdoorsmen, and this book, first published in 1970, covers all the basic equipment needed, from choosing the right gun to practical hunting clothes. It also describes the best way to hunt with or without dogs and offers some great tips on jump shooting.

Straight from the Bowstring

By Tom Tatum

Hunters, and maybe bowhunters more than any other group, when browsing through catalogs or visiting sporting goods store can be like kids on Christmas morning. All that stuff is fun to look at, but how much is necessary?

Do You Really Need It?

WALK INTO ANY well-stocked bow shop today and, for the uninformed bowhunter, you'll find a veritable minefield of accessories, gizmos and gadgets. It's a tough course for any bowbender to negotiate without getting a few fingers or toes singed.

Let's face it, bowhunting is not the simple activity it used to be. Over time, technology and imagination have conspired to create more hunting devices and aids than a traditional old-timer can shake a longbow at. Some items may ultimately be critical to the success or failure of any bowhunting attempt (we're talking deer hunting here, incidentally) while others remain completely superfluous. But sometimes it's almost impossible to distinguish between the two, and therein, as Shakespeare's Hamlet has so eloquently pointed out, lies the rub.

Whether a seasoned veteran or a greenhorn, today's bowhunter can find a modern archery catalog pretty intimidating if not overwhelming. So, on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 representing little, if any, need for the item, and 10 indicating a virtual and absolute necessity, let's consider the



FOR MOST bowhunting situations, treestands score a "9" and then some.

following items listed, more or less, in alphabetical order:

Arrows — 10

No, I'm not being facetious. The key word here is arrows with an "s"—that's plural and I'd recommend at least four in the



MASKING SCENTS are often critical to hunting success and score a "9." Scent lures are less critical, and rate just a "5."

field. And yes, there are two types of bowhunters who hunt with a single arrow: Mr. Macho, a kind of pseudo-Rambo who subscribes to the single arrow philosophy, "a real man doesn't need more than one arrow," and "Harry Shallowpockets" whose arrows, through loss and damage, have been whittled down to a single decent shaft and rationalizes "maybe I'll buy more next year." Neither of these guys should be allowed in the woods.

An irrefutable idiosyncrasy of bowhunters is that, on occasion, we miss. Three of the bucks I tagged in my more formative bowhunting years were taken with the third, second, and fourth arrow respectively. Not all those arrows were fired at the same animal, but they were released on the same particular foray into the woods. Today, with more experience under my belt, I still miss, but my shot selection is far more prudent. And a worse scenario than missing a deer with your lone arrow is hitting one and lacking another to finish the job. That's arrows with an "s" — critical.

Binoculars — 3

Binoculars are nice for bird watching and nature study, but for the average bowhunter, I believe they're an unnecessary luxury. Even the compact, lightweight

ones may be considered extra baggage. Bowhunting is a short-range proposition where identification of trophy game at great distances is seldom required. The exception to this is where long stalks are an expected part of the agenda, situations western hunters routinely encounter. They can also come in handy for identifying deer that pass well out of bow range for future reference — but in these cases you are technically scouting, not hunting. Fumbling with binoculars also creates additional movement, which increases your odds of being detected. They can also generate noise and hamper your shooting. If you're a diehard naturalist or doing scouting for your next hunt, take a pair along, but if serious bowhunting is your game, leave 'em home.

Camouflage Clothing — 8

Very important, but not vital. With all the patterns now on the market, the purchase of camo now seems as much of a fashion statement as a hunting application. Since most whitetail hunting is done from treestands, camouflage becomes less critical. More important is that the archer wears clothing that breaks up his outline, which can also be accomplished by wearing a plaid shirt. Deer are far more likely to detect movement than they are an uncamoouflaged hunter.

Camouflage Make-Up/Face Net — 5

Again, more important to ground dwellers than treestanders. A hunter's shiny, uncamoouflaged face can betray him, but applying and removing camo-cosmetics just seems to take up too much time. Because I wear glasses, where light reflected off the lenses is more likely to give me away, a complete headnet is more effective cover, but that also tends to get uncomfortable and obscures my vision. My solution was to keep a headnet at the ready until I spotted game, and then pull it into place be-

fore the deer came into range. Such camo is vital when you're hunting turkeys, but I've found that when hunting whitetails from treestands, it's unessential.

Compound Bow — 8

Although longbow and recurve enthusiasts would probably assign the compound a "1," it does give the average archer a big advantage. The ability to hold and maintain heavier draw weights (thanks to modern let-offs of 50 to 65 percent or more) translates into more accurate shooting for the vast majority of bowhunters.

Traditionalists may argue that compound technology perverts the entire concept of hunting with a primitive sporting arm, but more than once I've been behind these guys at 3-D shoots, and I know they spend a lot of searching for wayward arrows. I can respect their esoteric arguments, but I'll take the compound (and the venison) every time.

Drag Rope — 1

I've seen hunters lugging coils of rope heavy enough to anchor the Titanic. In reality, you don't need a drag rope. If you shoot a deer from your treestand, just harness your safety strap (always scored a 10) to your whitetail as a dragline. If you don't have a safety strap because you're hunting on the ground, you're probably not going to need a drag rope anyway. Statistics show that more than 90 percent of successful bowhunters hunt from elevated treestands.

Flashlight — 10

If you're on stand before first light (and you should be) you'll need a flashlight to get there quietly and safely. Even if you see well by moonlight, a flashlight is critical for safety. It identifies you as a human being and not the trophy buck of someone's pre-dawn imagination.

Grunt Call — 8

My guess is that about half the bucks I've killed — along with many others that

I've passed on — were enticed into range by calling. Although the pre-rut and rut are prime times for calling, I've lured curious and unwary deer within range on opening day. Of course, millions of deer have been taken over the years by archers (including yours truly) without calling devices, but these calls are inexpensive, unobtrusive, and can often spell the difference between tagging your buck or watching it stroll by out of range. There's no good reason not to carry at least one.

Masking Scents — 9

I debated on this one but just couldn't justify a 10. On those rare occasions where the wind is perpetually in your favor you can get by without them. For all intents and purposes, however, masking scents are pretty critical. Earth scents or scent killers are popular, but fox urine on your boots when traveling to and from your stand, coupled with raccoon urine deposited on the tree trunk above you may be the best way to go — although I stick with raccoon. Skunk scent, on the other hand, can be worse than no masking scent at all.

Mechanical Release — 5

About half the deer I've taken were arrowed with nothing between me and the bowstring but my gloved fingers. In the days when releases were first gaining popularity, I figured that in a hunting situation they might prove a liability — just one more thing to break, especially while fumbling for a second shot.

However, given the sophistication and reliability of modern releases and the fact that I have forsaken my fingers for a set of metal calipers, my thinking has taken a 180-degree turn.

I now know that more things can go wrong when you use fingers (slipping, catching or plucking) than with a release. Ultimately, it comes down to what you practice with, but I don't know an archer whose accuracy and consistency hasn't benefited from the use of a mechanical release.

Peep Sights — 2

Another case of what you're familiar with. I've killed deer with and without peeps, but when low light conditions combined with a peep sight cost me a trophy buck, I stopped using them. The problem with peeps is that they can become an absolute liability in poor light where you just can't locate the target. If you incorporate a sight pin, a kiss button and plenty of practice, your accuracy won't suffer from lack of a peep sight.

Plastic Bottle — 10

This serves as a urinal for the hunter who has less than superhuman bladder control. If you soil your stand area, you might as well start looking for another. Keeping your hotspots clean is vital to keeping them hot.

Rangefinder — 3

Seasoned bowhunters know better than to attempt shots at deer at unknown ranges. For most of us, unknown ranges are those that stretch well beyond our effective killing zone — generally within 30 yards. State-of-the-art compound bows zip arrows with enough speed that one sight pin will usually suffice out to 30 yards (and sometimes farther). Beyond that range, the prudent thing is to hold your fire.

There are two scenarios where a rangefinder might prove useful (and I'll confess to these applications myself, on occasion). The first is when you're safely nestled in your treestand where the height can distort distance estimations. If you haven't paced off distances with landmarks (stumps, rocks, etc.) beforehand, you can do it with the 'finder after the fact. One other situation where the rangefinder can be useful is when you're hunting field edges with no landmarks as frame of reference. Smaller deer can seem to be farther away than they are, just as larger deer might seem to be closer. In these cases, a rangefinder can determine the exact range and ultimately mean the difference between a hit and a miss.

Rattling Antlers — 2

Yes, during the rut you might catch me lugging a set of antlers into the woods, but I can't say that I've ever rattled in a buck. A few years back I coaxed a nice buck into range using some subtle rattling techniques, but those were in tandem with grunt calling, which may or may not have sufficed by itself. To my mind, however, antlers are bulky and noisy accessories whose purpose in most situations, here in Pennsylvania at least, can be better served by a grunt call.

Razor-Sharp Broadheads — 10

Absolutely essential. No explanation necessary.

Rubber-Soled Boots — 8

While scent-treated leather boots may be adequate, nothing beats rubber boots for keeping your tracks odor free. Definitely worth the difference they make.

Scent Lures — 5

These can be helpful in attracting deer to within bow range, particularly if you're hunting the rut or creating mock scrapes. Scent lures are a nice addition to any bowhunter's arsenal, but unlike masking scents, aren't one of your basics.

String Silencers — 9

With modern bows reaching their upper limits on speed, quieter bows now seem to be the focus of the industry. The bottom line is that a bow can't be too quiet. Cat whiskers, rubber bands, puffs or whatever it takes to silence the snap of your bowstring. A critical accessory — I've had more than one deer jump the sound of my bowstring, and without silencers to deaden that telltale twang, you may be putting yourself at an unnecessary disadvantage.

Treestands — 9

Probably 99 percent of my bowhunting is done from treestands. The other one percent is just the time I'm moving to and from my stand or possibly stalking a deer

that I've spotted in the process. I always have a climbing stand in the back of my truck, and I also have seven different hanging stands spread out over three different properties. Deer do look up, so the treestand bowhunter may not be quite as invincible as once thought. Be that as it may, when factors such as archer scent, archer movement and getting close to game are concerned, treestands do give the bowhunter a critical edge.

I've also lost enough skin from the inside of my arms from shinnying and slipping up and down trees to know that a portable climbing device is a worthwhile investment — let's rate it a 7. And, of course, caution while in treestands is of utmost importance. Years ago I was foolishly cavalier and careless about using

treestands. One beltless fall from a 12-foot high limb cured that bad attitude. Now I understand that safety harnesses are indispensable (I won't even start up a tree without one secured around the trunk) and rate them a solid 10+.

So, when you enter your local bow shop to relieve yourself of that hard-earned cash, you'll find no shortage of items to spend it on. Where your money goes is up to you. If money is no object, my suggestion would be to buy it and try it, because then if you need it, you'll have it.

Then again, if you're a resource limited working stiff like most of us, maybe you should consider the necessity of each purchase before buying. You need to ask yourself one question: How badly do I really need it . . . on a scale of 1 to 10? ☐

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The Shooters' Corner

By Don Lewis

Dedicated varmint hunters rely on high-power scopes to get the most out of their rifles and their shooting. Here's the dope on . . .

Varmint Scopes

“TRY A SHOT from my rifle,” an elderly farmer said as he handed me his Model 221 Savage. “I’m having problems connecting lately.”

While keeping a sharp eye on a chuck more than 100 yards away, I took the old single-shot, which was actually a combination breakdown outfit designed for both rifle and shotgun barrels. I think the options were the .22 Hornet and .30-30 rifle cartridges and 20, 16 and 12-gauge shotgun shells. This man’s 221 was a Hornet topped with a battered Weaver J-2.5. He had purchased the outfit in the early 1940s, and kept the rifle in the barn specifically for troublesome chucks.

When I tried to find the chuck in the scope, I realized why the owner was having trouble. The scope was out of focus, and both the ocular and objective lens were covered with thick dust. I spent several minutes cleaning the lens and focusing the scope for my eyes. When I pulled the trigger, dirt flew from the base of the den mound.

“You hit low,” my partner commented. “When it comes out, hold high.”

I did what he suggested, but missed again. Considering that the scope hadn’t been focused or cleaned for a long time, I figured the rifle probably hadn’t been sighted in either. I suggested setting up a target against a bank some 80 yards away, to see how the rifle performed.

My suspicions were correct; the rifle was shooting low and to the right. It took seven shots to zero it in, but the last three could be covered with a nickel close to the center of the bullseye. I helped the farmer focus the scope for his eyes and passed on several suggestions

Helen Lewis



TIM LEWIS puts a Springfield 4-14x scope through its paces. This scope features a range-finding Mil Dot reticle originally developed for the military.

A 4-16x SIGHTRON tops this .22BR Remington built by Jim Peightal, left. Lewis has found the Sightron to be a top quality varmint scope.



Helen Lewis

about trajectory. A thunderstorm ended our hunt, but the farmer ended the hole digger's career the next day. The Model 221 Savage Hornet was back on track.

Over decades of chuck hunting I've looked through a lot of scopes. Some were top performers, but others were poor beyond description. In 1939, when Savage introduced the 219/221 rifle models, scopes were not given much consideration, especially by big game hunters. Deer and bear hunters didn't trust scopes, and in all honesty, the thick brushy forests back then made a scope unnecessary. Most hunters preferred the full buckhorn rear sight with some type of colored front bead sight. In dense brush and dark woods, the buckhorn was right at home for shots that rarely reached 75 yards.

Varmint hunters and competitive shooters, however, had a different view. Lyman's fixed power Super Targetspot, which ran the gamut of fixed powers from 10x to 25x was a favorite with competitive shooters and many varmint hunters. Fecker offered their Woodchucker scope in 4.5x, 5.5x and 7x. Long range shooting was not in vogue in the late 1940s and early '50s, and Fecker believed those power ranges were adequate for the cartridges of that time, and he was probably right. Fecker also produced several fixed-power target scopes with power ranges from 10x through 30x.

I don't know when Unertl entered the scope building business, but the company had an array of competitive and varmint type scopes. I still have two 10x Ultra Varmint scopes from the early 1950s that are still clear and bright. All the scopes I have mentioned had target-type mounts (no internal adjustments). In other words, ad-

justing the rear mount for windage and elevation changed the bullet's impact.

I realize the Winchester .220 Swift, Savage .22 Hi-Power and Savage .250-3000 cartridges had been around for years, but it wasn't until the advent of the Remington .222 that varmint shooters learned that long range shooting required an optical sight. In other words, a hunter can't shoot any better than he can see. When distances stretched much beyond 125 yards, even an aperture (peep) sight can't compare with a scope. I mentioned three cartridges that had been around for years before the .222 Remington, but the .250-3000 and .22 Hi-Power (228-caliber) were considered by many as medium-size big game cartridges. The .220 with custom 60- to 70-grain bullets also fell into that class, but the Swift's critics doomed the cartridge. The Swift is now making a comeback with the varmint clan, and it still boasts the fastest velocity of any factory varmint cartridge.

The .22 Hornet came on the scene around 1930, but with an effective range of less than 200 yards, low magnification scopes were adequate. The .222 Remington could stay on course with plenty of killing power up to 275 yards and, on a still day, it was accurate beyond 300. The standardizing of the .22-250 by Remington in 1965 sounded the death knell for the .222. The .22-250 Remington with 55-grain bullets



Helen Lewis

is a super varmint cartridge for precise long range varmint hunting.

Long before the advent of the variable scope, varmint shooters basically used conventional fixed-power target scopes. There's nothing wrong with that, but the wide power range variables are more versatile and will do a better job in the field. The problems with early variable power scopes have been solved, and a .223, .22-250 or .243 topped with a wide power range variable such as a 4-16x, 5-20x or 6-24x is hard to beat on a varmint rig.

Why do I suggest variables rather than a fixed 10x or 12x scope? I'm quick to admit the fixed power 10x or 12x will certainly perform to a high degree, but the fixed power scope has limitations. For instance, a hunter using a fixed 12x scope is likely to encounter situations where more or less power is needed. Nothing can be done. For example, on a humid summer evening when haze is often present, too much power is worse than too little. This brings to mind an incident that happened when we were field testing Bausch & Lomb's 6-24x.

TO DROP this chuck, Lewis used a Sako Hunter 6mm PPC topped with a 6-24x Bausch & Lomb scope — and a Peighthal folding rest and seat.

We spotted a chuck more than 250 yards away, along the edge of a woods one late afternoon, with a hazy fog rolling out of the woods and across the field. Helen spotted the chuck through her binoculars, but couldn't find it in the scope. She checked the power setting and made a correction. After a second attempt to find the chuck in the scope, she made another power correction, fired and nailed the chuck. When asked what power setting she had used, she replied "around seven." The scope had been turned up to 20x for sighting in on the range. At a 20x setting, the haze in the field was magnified so much that it was impossible to see through it. Dropping back to a lower magnification made the shot possible.

Notice I mentioned using the scope at high magnification for sighting in. That's the beauty of wide power range variables. The hunter can use powers up to 14x for field shooting and powers above that for sighting in. In other words, the wide power range variable is virtually two scopes in one.

This brings up a touchy problem — the reticle. I'm not talking about the type or style of reticle, but about the thickness of the crosswires. Target shooters need a super fine crosswire. On the other hand, varmint shooters need a thicker crosswire, even though the fine wire type may be more appealing. This puts the scope buyer between a rock and a hard place, but I believe varmint shooters should stick with the thicker wire, because more shooting (or at least the more important shooting) is done in the field, not on the range; hence, the need for a more visible reticle.

For older hunters the thicker wire is a must. In my case, with macular degeneration dimming my vision, I must use a heavy wire. It's harder to use for precise group shooting, but the thicker wires pay off in the field.

Fun Game answer: SUNFLOWERS

Although the dot reticle has been in existence for decades, the "plex" type reticle has pretty much replaced it. However, the dot is now coming back as a yardage indicator in many varmint scopes. Years ago I had T. K. Lee install a dot on the vertical wire below the intersection of the crosswire in a scope I have. I have forgotten the exact measurements, but when zeroed dead on at 100 yards with the crosswire, the bullet's impact was dead on at 250 yards when I dropped down to the dot. Keep in mind, this was with one particular primer, power and bullet combination.

One super long range varmint shooter I know has four dots under the crosswire in his scope. He has a chart glued to his stock showing where each dot impacted with various load combinations. I said super long range, and that's what I mean. His bottom dot is zeroed in for 700 yards. The dots above that take care of other distances. All he has to do is zero in smack on at 100 yards, and he's set for shots out to 700.

I've used a Schmidt & Bender 4-16x-50mm with their No. 8 Dot reticle for years. Schmidt & Bender offers two reticles for this fine varmint scope. The company says that it put the reticle on the first focal plane, which they say guarantees that point of impact will remain the same at any magnification. S&B says this is particularly critical with small targets and scopes with a wide magnification range.

I guess it's correct to say that early variable power scopes had the reticle on the first focal plane. Since all power changes took place behind this plane, the reticle and target are seen as a single unit. There is no displacement regardless of the power setting. There is a drawback with this setup, however, because as the power is increased, the reticle seems to grow in proportion to the magnification. While the reticle looks thicker, it doesn't cover any more of the target at one setting or another, since its angle of subtension is the same. However, it looks big, so shooters complained. In most variables today, the reticle is on the second focal plane.

The unique reticle in the 4-16x Schmidt & Bender incorporates a system of hold-over dots calculated on known trajectories of typical varmint cartridge/bullet combinations. After zeroing in at 100 yards, the shooter can arrive at extremely accurate holdover estimations well beyond 600 yards. I had no reticle problems (because the reticle is on the first focal plane), and the dots worked to perfection with the velocity my load combination produced.

Sure, a good varmint scopes are expensive, but they offer a lifetime of hard use. One scope expert told me it takes five years of hunting to prove the quality of a scope. He could be right. The best approach is to install a scope that is primarily designed for varmint shooting. □

COVER PAINTING BY STEPHEN LEED

THE GAME COMMISSION is pleased to offer "Winter Rendezvous" featured on this month's cover. Limited to 950 signed and numbered prints, image is about 22¹/₂x15 inches; prints are \$125, plus \$10.95 s&h. Framed prints cost an additional \$97.50, plus \$14.95 s&h. PA residents must add 6 percent sales tax. Make checks payable to the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Order from the PA Game Commission, Dept. MS, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797.

Sales of "Winter Rendezvous" and other Working Together for Wildlife fine art prints and embroidered patches are used to support nongame related research projects and programs. For other items available from the Game Commission, visit "The Outdoor Shop" at www.pgc.state.pa.us.

A Gamebird's Flush

NOTHING IN HUNTING excites me as much as a gamebird's flush. A woodcock's twittering twist-up — a grouse's thunderous departure — a pheasant's hoarse cackle as it climbs skyward — the explosion of color as a wood duck splashes out of a beaver pond.

I store in my mind the scenes of gamebirds flushing, to tide me over from one hunting season to the next. Some of the memories have stayed with me for years. They center on the instant when the quarry is sighted, when it puts its entire essence into fleeing, when I try to overcome my limitations and arrest its headlong flight — when bird and hunter intersect for one single magical moment.

I remember the first ruffed grouse I ever bagged. It was almost 30 years ago, in

The Barrens, a low-lying tract of aspen, scrub oak and pitch pine in Centre County. I had hunted for hours without so much as hearing a flush. Kicking through the leaves, dispirited, I stopped, looked around at the brushy woods, and said out loud (even though I wasn't hunting with a partner or a dog): "This place just has to have grouse."



At about the "to have," a grouse roared up from a clump of blueberry. To this day I can recall the taut flexion of its chestnut-brown tail, the way it yawed slightly in flight, and how when I shot, it suddenly folded its wings and slanted back to earth. I remember the elation, the amazement I felt at successfully connecting with such a wild, wary bird.

I don't need to down a bird to gain satisfaction from a flush. I remember a cold morning in a dank creekside covert where the bare earth was dotted with holes freshly made by worm-seeking bills. My springer spaniel almost nabbed the woodcock on the ground. Up through the saplings it flitted, on pumping, whistling wings. I decided to take the bird at the top of its rise. But the woodcock banked suddenly, then darted between the tree trunks down the only low-level flight path available — straight at my face.

I saw the bird with total clarity: the cinnamon breast, the reaching spread of the wing primaries, the beak rimed with gray mud, the big glimmering eye, the spiky white-tipped tail feathers flaring as the woodcock swept past. I turned to take the bird going away — and sent the right barrel's shot charge into an aspen's trunk. Flustered, I then proceeded to lift my cheek off the stock, so that the left barrel peppered the air somewhere above the bird. The woodcock flew across the creek and, on blurring wings, headed for parts unknown.

When a gamebird flushes, it claims every iota of my attention. All of the infinite stimuli of the natural world are suddenly and completely concentrated in that one telling moment. I am fully in the present, aware of my surroundings and myself.

-Chuck Fergus

WORKING TOGETHER FOR WILDLIFE



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FOXTAIL PHEASANTS, by Susan Bankey Yoder, is the 2002 Working Together for Wildlife fine art print. Once the king of upland gamebirds here in the Keystone State, pheasant numbers have dropped, primarily due to shrinking habitat. Still, pockets of wild birds exist in some spots and pheasants are stocked in many areas open to public hunting, providing sport to those diligent hunters who seek the thrill of a cackling rooster exploding from underfoot.

PRINTS are on acid-free paper; image is 15 x 22½ inches. Cost is \$125, plus \$7.50 s&h (for framing add \$97.50, plus \$15 s&h). PA residents add 6% state sales tax.

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February, 2002

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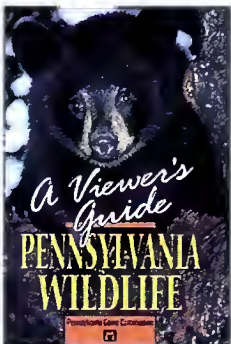
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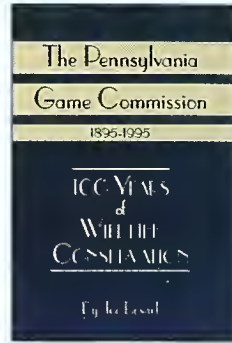
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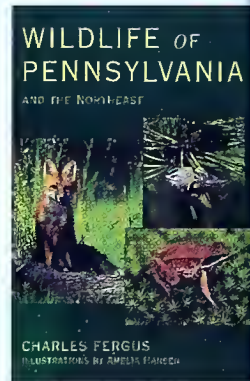
Pennsylvania Game Commission: 1895-1995 by Joe Kosack, covers the agency's first 100 years and includes more than 60 historical photographs.
Price: \$12.26

Pennsylvania Game Cookbook is a collection of nearly 200 recipes for popular, and not so popular, game animals.
Price: \$4.71



Mammals of Pennsylvania, by J. Kenneth Doult et.al. profiles the state's mammals and their roles in the state's history.
Price: \$9.43

Wildlife of Pennsylvania and the Northeast, by Chuck Fergus blends solid scientific information with his own anecdotes. Covers birds and mammals, along with reptiles and amphibians, 438 pages.
Price: \$19.95



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PENNSYLVANIA GAME NEWS (ISSN 0031-451X) is published monthly for \$12 per year, \$34.50 for three years, or membership in Pennsylvania's Cooperative Farm-Game Project or Safety Zone Project; to Canada and all other foreign countries, \$13 U.S. currency, per year. Published by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Phone (717) 787-4250. Periodicals postage paid at Harrisburg, Pa. CHANGE OF ADDRESS: POSTMASTER: Send both old and new addresses to Pennsylvania Game News, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Allow six weeks for processing. Material accepted is subject to our requirements for editing and revising. Author payment covers all rights and title to accepted material, including manuscripts, photographs, drawings and illustrations. No information contained in this magazine may be used for advertising or commercial purposes. Opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Copyright © 2002 by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, an Equal Opportunity Employer, the programs of which are all administered consistent with the goals and objectives of Affirmative Action. All rights reserved.

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Newsstand consultant, Celtic Moon Publishing, 1-877-730-6263

Big Game, 2001

AS YOU'VE PROBABLY REALIZED, this month's issue features the results of our 2001 big game scoring program and the stories of how some of the biggest trophies were taken. The Game Commission and the Pennsylvania Outdoor Writers Association started the big game measuring program in 1965 to showcase the outstanding big game hunting opportunities available in Pennsylvania. Since then, 13 measuring sessions have been held.

With this latest scoring session, 555 new deer and bear trophies have been added to our official big game records list. More specifically, these consist of 145 typical white-tailed deer taken with a firearm; 20 nontypical white-tailed deer taken with a firearm; 248 typical white-tailed deer taken with a bow; 14 nontypical whitetails taken with a bow; 127 black bears taken with a firearm; and one black bear taken with a bow.

Looking at these recent records, the year 2000 really jumps out, as roughly twice as many record book deer were taken that year than in any other. In 2000, taken with a firearm were 39 typical deer and 6 nontypical deer. Taken with a bow were 94 typical deer and 5 nontypicals. More interesting, perhaps, is where these trophies were taken. Of the 145 record typical deer taken with a firearm, 11 were taken in Westmoreland County, 10 in Washington, 9 in Berks, 8 in Fayette and 7 in Bradford. Of the 20 nontypical whitetails taken with a firearm, 3 came from Bucks and 2 from Allegheny.

For archery, of the 248 typicals taken with a bow, 27 came from Westmoreland County, 24 from Allegheny, 17 from Washington, and nine each from Schuylkill and Berks. For nontypicals, 4 came from Allegheny County.

As the years go by, Pennsylvania is producing bigger and bigger black bears. In just this past scoring session, seven measuring 22 or better were scored. It wasn't until 1986 that any bear scoring 22 or better was measured here. Of the 126 bears taken with a firearm and measured in 2001 that met the 19-00 minimum, 12 came from Lycoming County, 10 from Somerset, and 9 from Clearfield.

When the top trophies were honored last September at the Pennsylvania Outdoor Writers Association meeting in DuBois, it was announced that elk have been added to our big game program. Specifically, minimum scores for our program are: typical elk taken with a firearm, 300; nontypical taken with a firearm, 325; typical archery, 200 and nontypical archery, 275. Elk will be included in the next measuring session.

Due to an oversight, that James Rowles had taken, with a firearm, a nontypical whitetail that measured 203-1 was not known until after the awards ceremony had been held. Nonetheless, we're pleased to have Mr. Rowles' account of how he took his trophy here, beginning on page 22, along with Garry Forgy's story of how he took what became the number two nontypical whitetail in this particular measuring session.

Of course, taking a trophy animal is not why most of us hunt. But it's sure nice knowing record class deer and bear are out there. Just as the Game Commission and members of the Pennsylvania Outdoor Writers Association knew back in 1965, Pennsylvania is home to some outstanding trophies, and that's a fact we can all take pride in. — *Bob Mitchell*

letters

Editor:

Thank you. I picked up bowhunting in 2000. Never got a shot off, but enjoyed being out in the woods. This past year, however, was different. I got a 9-point on the last day of the season. The deer went down about 50 yards from my stand. This may sound crazy, but if I had not read the articles in *Game News* over the past two years, I would be talking about the one that got away. The archery articles were the secret to my success. Shot placement and patience was the key.

E. MILLER
HATBORO

Editor:

My son and I would like to thank the Game Commission for the enjoyable time we had together this past season. Philip is 12 and this was his first hunting season. He got a doe on opening day and, needless to say, was very excited. I have been hunting in Pennsylvania since 1986, and have been hooked ever since.

M. K. BARONE,
WARSAW, NY

Editor:

I've read that the Game Commission has formed an advisory committee to study game land use by groups not associated with hunting or trapping. Game lands have been purchased with hunting and furtaking license fees and funding from the Pittman-Robertson funds. With sportsmen footing the costs

for game lands, I would like to know who will be responsible for the damage to land and wildlife that will occur if other, noncompatible uses are permitted.

S. ZAMPOGNA
NEW KENSINGTON

Editor:

Reading that *Game News* is now available on newsstands is disturbing because it portends the demise of one of the few uncluttered, legible, informative and local publications available and of interest to me.

If the Game Commission heeds the recommendation of the distributor to add title blurbs in order to increase sales, what will follow? Not only will the art on the covers be obscured and, eventually, eliminated, but also advertisements will be an addition. Then, I suspect, your whole look will change.

Game News is and has been different, and it is unique in that it only has had to keep its subscribers in mind.

D. HIGHLANDS
DAYTON

We're pleased to get Game News on so many major newsstands in Pennsylvania and neighboring states because it will allow us to reach many new readers. And while cover slugs are printed on the covers of magazines sent to news-

stands, we don't plan to change the size, content or any other major aspect that has made Game News so popular.

Editor:

Enjoyed "Give it a Try" in the November issue. I believe you hit the nail right on the head: Taking care of the game we harvest, we more fully appreciate the "Circle of Life," which our Native Americans spoke of.

And maybe, too, we can more fully appreciate how lucky we are here in Pennsylvania, to have the hunting opportunities we do.

I, too, was not confident I could butcher a deer, but I started, step-by-step. Now, 10 years later, I have to say that I'm very proud when I bring a meal to the table, of game I harvested, cleaned, butchered and cooked.

R. URICK
PAXINOS

Editor :

Just wanted to drop you a few lines to tell you how much your magazine means to me. I am currently with the First Infantry Division serving in Kuwait. Hunting is very close to my heart, and reading your magazine helps me feel closer to home. Believe me, your magazine is enjoyed all over the world.

PVT. N. MOREHEAD
DAUPHIN

Your comments are welcome. Mail them to "Letters," 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Letters will be edited for brevity and clarity.



Washington County

Washington Wallhanger

IT WAS a typical gray, cold, overcast December afternoon in Washington County in 1996. The hunter had stood on his stand for a couple of hours, staring at the ever changing shadows and splashes of old snow that still dotted the landscape. For the fourth time in the last 10 minutes he glanced at his watch. It was 4:30; 20 minutes of hunting time remained. One part of him longed for the comforts of home and the hot coffee that awaited him.

His thoughts were not on the hunt when he looked up and noticed a deer standing about 80 yards away, partly hidden by the shadows of the dense treeline. Like so many times before, the .300 Weatherby — his companion on so many hunts — came to his shoulder and seemed to point at the buck on its own. What a buck, he thought, one that was well worth the wait. At least a 20-inch spread and eight long, even points. Like a ghost the buck slowly began to drift away, and the scope crosshairs settled on the ribcage, right behind the shoulder. Something wasn't right, though. This wasn't the big buck Ron LaBrosse had vowed he would hunt; the one he had spent his time pursuing.

Ron had first spotted the big buck early in September, when the velvet made the huge rack look even larger. He had hunted from Pennsylvania to Alaska and had never seen such a buck. His game room wall was

lined with outdoor books, and he knew the Boone & Crockett *Records of North American Big Game* book well. He remembered that to qualify for the book, a whitetail had to score a minimum of 170 points. But this buck, he felt, would exceed that score, maybe by quite a bit. His thoughts became consumed with this super buck.

As time passed, however, Ron started to have doubts. Had the buck been as big as he thought? Antlers tend to grow in the mind with the passing of time. The answer to that question came later in the month, when he spotted the buck again. He hadn't exaggerated. It was as big as he thought. That is when he vowed to take this buck and no other. He had a hunting trip to British Columbia planned for November, but he'd have time to hunt during the Pennsylvania archery season in October, and then be back in time for the firearm season.

During the archery season, Ron spent quite a bit of time in his treestand. Of course, like most of us, he also had to work. Even the owner of a company has a boss. During the course of the season he spotted five or six bucks, but none of them even caused him to raise his bow. One day late in the archery season, however,

By George H. Block, III

about 15 minutes before quitting time, Ron looked up and spotted the big buck. There was no mistaking the rack as the deer made its way toward him. At about 50 yards the buck turned and veered off to one side. Ron had the bow back at full draw, but the shot was chancy. Reluctantly, he lowered the bow and let the buck pass, unaware of his presence. He hoped there would be another time. He knew others had seen the buck and the word was out. Would someone else bag him while he was in British Columbia? His next chance at the buck would come during the rifle season.

Back in Pennsylvania and with the rifle season in full swing, Ron had spent 4½ days waiting for the big buck to show itself, and he was getting a bit restless when the big 8-point stepped out in front of him. Now he had to make a quick decision. Should he shoot this buck, which could be his best ever, or keep on waiting and hoping? Finally, he lowered the Weatherby, remembering the vow he had made weeks ago. It would be the big buck or nothing, unless he heard of someone bagging it.

The exhilaration was draining from his system when he noticed movement where the 8-point had first appeared. He couldn't believe his eyes when the huge buck stepped out in the same place where the other buck had been. Now he was glad he had waited. The Weatherby barked and the buck disappeared. Although the appearance of the deer hadn't shaken Ron that much, after the shot a rush of adrenalin sent his emotions into high gear.

It would be dark soon, so Ron hurried up to where the buck had been standing. No deer. Ron's impression was that the deer had moved to the left after the shot, so he searched in that direction. No blood. No hair. Darkness was creeping in, and Ron be-



gan to worry.

He rushed home, put the rifle in the rack and got his son to help. They rushed back to the spot and looked around, but still no sign of the buck or that it had even existed.

After about an hour of futile searching he dejectedly made his way home. Could he have missed? That night seemed the longest of his life. Ron kept seeing the crosshairs on the huge buck's shoulder. He couldn't have missed.

Early the next morning he was out searching again. He didn't search for long, however, because not 30 yards from where the buck had been standing when he shot at it, he found it. He had thought the buck had gone to the left, when it actually had jumped a few yards to the right after the well-placed heart shot: Good things are worth waiting for.

I first heard of the LaBrosse buck from Doug Dunkerly, who was a Washington County WCO at that time. I often hear of big bucks being taken, but most turn out to be not much more than average. But Doug helped me measure deer on more than one occasion, and when he said the buck was huge, I listened.

I've been a Boone & Crockett measurer

for some time, and I told Doug to give Ron my phone number and to tell him to call me after 60 days (the required time to allow for shrinkage).

I saw a photo of the buck, and it definitely was big, but it's hard to judge a buck in a photo. One thing I noticed in the photo bothered me: two of the points on one main beam seemed to be growing from the same base. If one of them came from another point it would be a direct deduction, but if they had a common base on the main beam, it could be measured as a normal point. I just had to wait and see. I knew that if the point was a common base point, I was looking at a potential Boone and Crockett Club buck, and they are rare in Pennsylvania. This is not because we have inferior deer, but because we have

so many hunters, bucks just don't live to maturity. In fact, I know of only one B&C buck taken in the state in the last 27 years. That is until this last measuring session.

On a cold February day I drove to McMurray with my measuring helper, John Dino, to score the LaBrosse buck. As we entered the LaBrosse home, I bypassed the cougar and Dall sheep mount to see that special buck. More important, I wanted to see that odd point on the left antler beam.

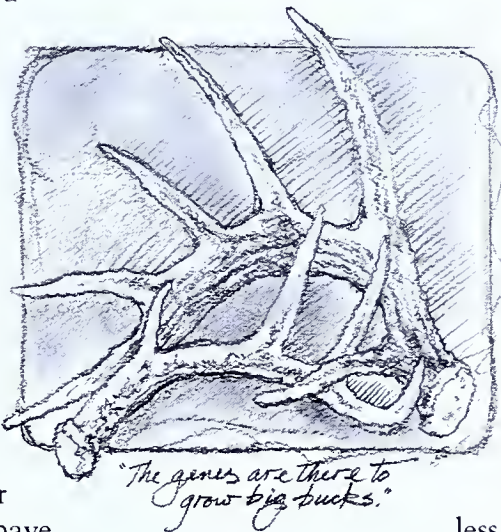
To my relief, it was obviously a common base point, not any sort of "maybe" point that can bring about a questionable call by the measurer.

As we placed the tape on the antlers, I knew this was the largest typical Pennsylvania buck I had ever scored. The final tally was done three times, to make certain there were no errors, and finally I said to Ron, "It makes Boone and Crockett."

The really amazing thing is that the gross score almost reaches the 200 mark. After the subtractions, the final score is 172 6/8. I couldn't help but wonder how the gross score compares to other top bucks from the state, but regardless, when one consid-

ers the millions of bucks harvested in Pennsylvania over the years, a 172 buck is not too shabby.

As I handed Mr. LaBrosse the plaque I had accepted on his behalf at the big Game Awards banquet for taking the top typical buck with a firearm in the 2001 measuring session, I had to wonder: Despite all of his sheep, bears, mule deer and elk, how is he going to top this? □



Typical White-tailed Deer- Gun

* denotes current owner

Rank/Hunter		Hometown	County Taken	Year	Score
1	LaBrosse Jr, Ronald J	McMurray	Washington	1996	172-6
2	Nau, Bernard				
	*Robert Nau	Monroeville	Westmoreland	1958	167-4

3	Cassese, Mike	Tidioute	Armstrong	1949	165-7
4	Duff Jr, Robert E	Blairsville	Westmoreland	1999	165-0
5	Rocco, Richard	Pulaski	Mercer	1998	164-1
6	Conrad, Wade	New Providence	Lancaster	1997	164-0
7	Orlo, Michael G	Latrobe	Westmoreland	2000	163-5
8	Hess, Joseph E	Creskaside	Indiana	2000	162-5
9	Hilbert, Lamont	Kutztown	Berks	1998	161-6
10	Bunch, James	Knox	Clarion	1996	160-6
11	Swanson, Dennis R	Edinburg	Lawrence	1995	160-3
11	Ulrich Jr, Cal	Robesonia	Berks	2000	160-3
13	Dhans, Robert	Washington	Washington	2000	160-2
13	Yost, George				
	*Ray Yost	Port Carbon	Schuylkill	1944	160-2
15	Moon, Bernard	Wyalusing	Bradford	2000	160-0
16	LaSalvia, Dean	West Alexander	Washington	1996	159-1
17	Nocket, Thomas J				
	*Steven Nocket	Dickerson, MD	Schuylkill	1948	158-7
18	Williams, William S	Milan	Bradford	1998	158-1
19	Klinger, Robert	Bernville	Berks	1995	158-0
19	Mulig, Mark	Pittsburgh	Venango	1998	158-0
21	Caton, James A	McKees Rocks	Allegheny	1994	157-7
22	Haser, Paul	Pittsburgh	Forest	1996	157-6
23	Unger, Glenn D	Sinking Spring	Berks	2000	157-4
24	Itterly, Scott	Etters	York	1999	157-0
25	Ehst, Kevin	Franconia	Montgomery	1996	155-2
25	Haun, Daniel	Polk	Venango	1999	155-2
27	Garvine, C Raymond	Downingtown	Bradford	2000	154-2
27	Nulph, Alan	New Brighton	Armstrong	1995	154-2
29	Heid, Jamie M	Peckville	Wayne	1998	153-2
30	Barclay, Robert D	Indianhead	Fayette	2000	152-7
30	Shaffer, Larry				
	* Don Rupert	Elderton	Armstrong	1995	152-7
32	Helman, Andrew	Chambersburg	Franklin	1995	152-1
32	Kleyn Jr, David	Export	Allegheny	1995	152-1
34	Port, Ronald E	Indiana	Indiana	1995	151-7
35	Mitchell, Darvin L	Beaver Springs	Union	1995	151-6
36	Groger Jr, Wayne	Cochrannton	Venango	1997	151-3
36	Rohrbach, Allen H	Breinigsville	Lehigh	2000	151-3
36	Wichryk, Keith	Pittsburgh	Crawford	2000	151-3
39	Flamino, Chester	New Castle	Lawrence	2000	151-0
40	Adams, Patricia A	Hamburg	Berks	1999	150-6
40	Bittner, Marlo J	Rockwood	Somerset	2000	150-6
40	Smith, Peggy A	Sugar Run	Bradford	1998	150-6
43	English, Tim	Frenchville	Clearfield	2000	150-4
43	Freeman, Greg	Gillett	Bradford	1993	150-4
45	Wealand, John H	Stevens	Lancaster	1983	150-3
46	Bigelow Jr, Harry J	Linden	Lycoming	2000	150-0
46	Novak, Robert	Bethlehem	Northampton	2000	150-0
48	Weyant, Sam	Claysburg	Bedford	2000	149-7
49	Knaub, David B	Shrewsbury	York	1996	149-6
50	Burdyn, Richard A	Throop	Wayne	1995	149-4
50	Potts, Joseph	Indiana	Indiana	1997	149-4

52	Musser, Wallace C	Bally	Berks	2000	149-1
53	Leshner, Terry A	Mohnton	Columbia	1999	149-0
53	Pasternak, John	Edwardsville	Wyoming	1999	149-0
55	Hakun, Kevin	Royersford	Chester	1997	148-7
55	Knieriem, Roy	Kutztown	Lehigh	1999	148-7
55	Slatt, Jim	Steelton	Dauphin	2000	148-7
58	Williams, Christopher	Corning, NY	Elk	1998	148-6
59	Blair, Clark				
	*Kenneth Anderson	Tidioute	Clarion	1930	148-4
59	Oblak, Joel	Ruffsedale	Westmoreland	1999	148-4
61	Houser, Emerald	Ringtown	Schuylkill	1999	148-3
62	Bingaman, Walter	Dornsife	Northumberland	2000	148-1
63	Misko, Eric S	Penn Run	Elk	1995	148-0
64	Pears, Wayne	Mercer	Mercer	1995	147-7
65	Bowman, Andrew	New Holland	Schuylkill	1996	147-6
65	Olczak, James W	Youngstown	Westmoreland	1999	147-6
67	Schope, Douglas S	Latrobe	Westmoreland	1996	147-4
68	Ball, Jimmy	Greencastle	Cambria	1998	147-0
69	Kepler, Nathan S				
	*Ethel Rush	Washington	Washington	1999	146-7
70	Godfrey, Kimberly	Monongahela	Washington	1999	146-6
71	Kieta, Richard	Vanderbilt	Fayette	1994	146-5
71	Nickel, Monroe				
	* James A Blaine	New Bloomfield	Cumberland	1973	146-5
73	Marsh, Shane D	Windber	Somerset	2000	146-4
74	Rice, Rick	Middleburg	Montour	1998	146-3
75	Wilson Jr, John W	Tyrone	Blair	1999	146-2
75	Wright, Brian	Shavertown	Wyoming	1998	146-2
77	Hall, Gregory	Dunbar	Fayette	1994	146-1
77	Nace, Robert	Convent Station, NJ	Dauphin	1998	146-1
79	Clee III, Henry	Williamstown	Wyoming	1999	145-7
79	Shroyer III, Louis D	Stoystown	Somerset	2000	145-7
81	Oyler, M Roy				
	*William R Lyons	Muncy	Clinton	1936	145-6
82	Daley, Randall E	Central City	Somerset	2000	145-4
82	Pilliteri, John M	Edinboro	Erie	2000	145-4
84	Everly, Theodore I	Smithfield	Fayette	2000	145-3
84	Mickey, George A				
	*George D. Mickey	Bedford	Bedford	Unkn	145-3
86	Drost Jr, Edward	Reading	Berks	1997	145-2
87	Gearhart, Royal	Hanover	Union	1998	145-1
88	Schoenly, Randy L	Alburtis	Berks	1989	145-0
88	Trice, Dennis R	Brookville	Jefferson	1998	145-0
90	Baumgart Jr, Ralph C	Pittsburgh	Fayette	1999	144-5
90	Fox, Forest				
	*Marie Fox	Greenville	Venango	1947	144-5
92	Spittle Jr, Edward	Jonestown	Lebanon	1996	144-2
93	Bordner, Ralph E	Dauphin	Dauphin	2000	144-0
94	Allen, Wallace	Butler	Crawford	2000	143-7
94	Dillie, William H	Claysville	Washington	1969	143-7
94	Larioni, Val J	Lake Ariel	Wayne	1968	143-7
97	Geiger, Ron E	Athens	Bradford	1999	143-6

98	Davis, John	Pipersville	Bucks	2000	143-4
99	Woods, Craig A	Connellsville	Fayette	1995	143-1
100	Bitterman, Gregory S	Jonestown	Perry	1998	143-0
100	Katrencik, Rudolph	Hendersonville	Washington	1967	143-0
102	Hentz, Brent	Hegins	Schuylkill	2000	142-7
103	Kline Jr, W Barry	Clearfield	Washington	1995	142-6
103	Safko, Devin	Duncannon	Perry	2000	142-6
105	Bell, Mark	Mt Pleasant	Westmoreland	2001	142-5
105	Bucuren, Thomas G	Conneaut Lake	Armstrong	1997	142-5
105	Haldeman, Dale	Port Royal	Juniata	1999	142-5
105	Honkus, Michael J	Hooversville	Somerset	1998	142-5
105	Quinn, Timothy	Hostetter	Westmoreland	1996	142-5
110	Anderson, Glenn	Saltsburg	Westmoreland	1997	142-4
110	Zimmerman, Larry	New Florence	Westmoreland	1996	142-4
112	Heckman, Wayne	Polk	Venango	1999	142-3
113	Salaneck, Peter	Douglassville	Berks	2000	142-2
114	McDannell, Harry E	Biglerville	Adams	1998	142-1
115	Bloss, Vincent	Gilberton	Schuylkill	1999	142-0
115	Catlin, John W				
	*Wesley Catlin	Tidioute	Forest	1939	142-0
115	Hofer II, Robert K	Duncannon	Perry	1995	142-0
115	Wasson, Jane M	Friedens	Somerset	1996	142-0
119	Fingado, Richard	St Marys	Elk	2000	141-7
120	Jarecki, Gary P	Gouldsboro	Sullivan	1999	141-5
120	Percoskie, John	Dalmatia	Northumberland	1997	141-5
120	Richter, Rodney	Champion	Fayette	1995	141-5
123	Naughton, Robert	Honey Brook	Huntingdon	1990	141-4
124	Flizack, Frank O	Jim Thorpe	Carbon	2000	141-3
124	Harmon, Herbert H	Berwick	Columbia	2000	141-3
126	Smitle, Lawrence				
	*Richard D Smitle	Connellsville	Fayette	1955	141-3
127	Bertha, Drew	Natrona Heights	Allegheny	1992	141-2
127	Hanna, John K	Harrisville	Venango	2000	141-2
127	Pilliteri, Joseph A	Waterford	Erie	2000	141-2
130	Brown, Marvin	Montgomery	Sullivan	1998	141-1
130	Demko, Ray	Sweet Valley	Luzerne	1965	141-1
130	Ditzler, Drew T	Dushore	Sullivan	1998	141-1
130	Frees, Jim	Leesport	Bradford	2000	141-1
134	McAdams, Frank	Claysville	Washington	2000	141-0
135	Drexel, Jim	Hamburg	Chester	2000	140-7
135	Klinger, Dennis	Dornsife	Northumberland	1997	140-7
137	Rambo, Michael L	Meadville	Crawford	2000	140-5
138	Chilcoat, Dennis	Seven Valleys	York	1998	140-4
138	Rambone, Richard E	Belvidere, NJ	Northampton	2000	140-4
140	Abbott, Thomas	Bradford	McKean	1995	140-3
140	Dunn, William	Latrobe	Westmoreland	1998	140-3
142	Radivich, Paul				
	*Walter Shameleski	Herndon	Northumberland	1965	140-2
143	Calhoun, Ron T	California	Washington	1998	140-1
143	Mosco Jr, John A	DuBois	Clearfield	1996	140-1
143	Stanton, Tim J	Nicholson	Wyoming	1995	140-1

High Rock Buck

By Doug Stetler

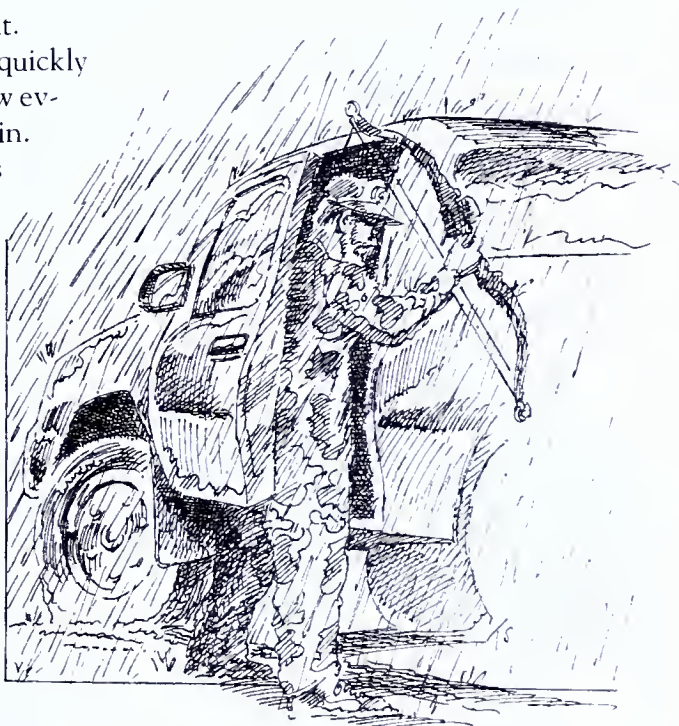
THE 6-MILE DRIVE from the house seemed longer than usual and would probably be pointless on this morning. Heavy rain pounded the pickup roof, and even with the windshield wipers on high speed, visibility was tough. The truck's tires fought for traction with each pothole and rock on the access ridge road to SGL 42 in Westmoreland County. It was, however, the last week of the 1995 archery season, and the rut had deer moving.

Old, large-racked bucks were leaving the safety of their secluded hideouts to compete for does. In fact, Gene Livingston was hunting this area on the side of the mountain because he and his brother-in-law, Craig Gaudlip, had seen two large bucks fighting there the day before. Gene hunts only for trophy bucks, with racks that spread at least two to three inches past the ears. He took a week off work, and wasn't about to miss an opportunity to catch one of these huge bucks out and about.

These cagey old monarchs can quickly detect unnatural sounds, and know every scent native to their mountain. Gene, therefore, washes and treats his clothing with UV Killer, and then places everything, including his LaCrosse rubber boots, in a plastic bag with leaves, acorns and H.S. Earth Scent wafers. He normally changes clothes outside the truck at his hunting destination, but because of the harsh weather this day, Gene knew any scent remaining on his clothes from the truck would be beaten into the ground by the rain, so he changed clothing outside the house on this morning.

When Gene opened the truck door, a cold, windy rain smacked him in the face. He hesitated a moment, and then reached back into the lighted, warm truck cab and pulled his archery gear out into the battering rain. He used a small flashlight, occasionally lighting the ground directly in front of him, as he picked his way over slippery fallen trees and around wet undergrowth. The storm shifted back and forth between rain, sleet and snow flurries. A sudden drop in the temperature caused Gene to pause. His thoughts turned back to the warm, dry truck. "What the heck am I doing out in this kind of weather," he said to himself. Well, I'm up here now and I am not going home, no matter how cold it gets, he thought.

Sometimes Gene hunts from hang-



ing treestands, placed in trees that have ample limbs he can climb, which also helps camouflage his position. This morning, however, he decided to hunt from one of his favorite natural stands: a rock ledge 10 feet above several well used intersecting deer trails. Locating the boulder, Gene sat down on a water soaked fallen log. Sitting still caused the bitter coldness to penetrate his body even more. He wiggled his numb toes, fought off the shivers, and hoped for some warmth from the morning light.

About 9:15, a small buck came up the trail. Gene let it pass. About 15 minutes later, and with the small buck being the only deer Gene had seen, and because he was extremely cold, he decided to still-hunt along some old tram roads. He noticed a spike buck slowly moving up a trail, 80 yards away, but after watching the area without spotting other deer, Gene moved on. He came upon a flock of turkeys that had moved out onto the tram road, trying to dry off. The big birds melted back into the woodland cover when they spotted him.



Then, suddenly, Gene saw a huge buck looking at him from behind a tree, and he immediately spotted a strange looking drop tine on one antler beam, Oh, no, there he is, Gene thought. The buck stared at Gene for a few seconds, then turned and ran down into a steep hollow.

Gene carefully inched to where he had seen the buck disappear and peeked down the hollow, slowly scanning the landscape for any parts of a motionless deer. He figured the buck ran straight down a short distance, and then hid in some mountain laurel.

Gene took his time as he quietly moved up the mountain, and then backtracked down to a small bench directly adjacent to the opposite side of the laurel. Finding huge prints in the ground leaf litter, he settled in behind a large tree, to let things settle down again.

After a short while, Gene grabbed the large, thick rattling antlers he carries and began clashing and grinding them together, and then raking nearby saplings and larger trees. Cupping his hands over his grunt tube call, he directed loud grunts toward the far side of the bench, to make the staged buck fight sound like it was moving away from him. Nothing happened.

Gene then slipped back, past where he had first seen the buck and on to the other side of the hollow. Having hunted this area before he knew where there was a large rock, about 15 yards above some well-used deer trails.

This was the same area where Gene's brother-in-law, Craig, hunted early in the season, when a large deer suddenly appeared in a thick stand of striped maples, 10 to 15 yards in front of his treestand. The deer's head was down, feeding. Because the deer was so large, Craig decided to fill his doe tag if a shot presented itself, but when the deer raised its head, Craig was surprised to see that it had a large, strange looking rack. The antlers appeared crooked on the buck's



head. When the buck canted its head, Craig noticed a drop tine. He took his eyes off the buck for a split second to attach his draw release to the bowstring, but when he looked up to draw his bow, the buck was gone. It had disappeared without a sound.

Remembering Craig's early season encounter only a short distance away, and the fact that Gene had just encountered the same buck, probably meant that this was the buck's core area. A high level of excitement built up inside Gene as he carefully climbed up through the rocks to his high rock stand.

Gene crouched down on one knee and meticulously made some aggressive grunts with his Quaker Boy call, first in one direction, then the other, to simulate bucks coming from different sides of the intersecting trails, and then smacked the ground and raked his antlers together.

Gene had no sooner laid down his antlers than a twig snapped behind him. He slowly turned his head just far enough to the left for his peripheral vision to spot a big buck strutting stiff-legged down the trail. When the buck got about 12 feet past Gene, he realized that it was the big one

again. Gene forced himself to take his eyes off the antlers, drew back the PSE Fireflight compound bow and waited for a good shot. Oh, please, let him stop, Gene hoped and hoped.

When the buck was 20 yards out, it quartered slightly, presenting a shot. Gene released the 78 Easton aluminum arrow, and the 80-grain Mini-Blaster Rocket broadhead buried deep, with only a few feathers exposed at the entrance wound. Gene knew the big buck was hit hard; it ran about 60 yards, squatted, tripped, fell down, and remained motionless.

Gene let out a victorious yell and clambered down through the rocks from his high perch, knocked another arrow and approached the magnificent trophy. It was down for good.

Using an arrow as a crude measuring device, Gene took a quick measurement. He remembers thinking, Man, it's only 22, 23 inches wide, but I'll take it. Then Gene cradled the heavy rack with one hand as he counted the points: 20.

After tagging and field-dressing the buck, Gene tried to drag it with a rope, straining every muscle in his body. He discovered that he could drag the buck only about 10 feet at a time, by grasping its antlers and lifting the huge head and neck, while walking backwards. He decided to drag it to an old logging road about 400 yards away, and then get help, since he couldn't load the buck by himself. By the time he got his buck to the road, he wasn't cold anymore. Hiding the deer in a thick patch of mountain laurel, he covered it with brush, and then headed for his truck and then went to get a buddy to help him load it.

November 7, 1995, is a day Gene will replay in his memory forever. He knew he had taken an exceptional buck, but he never dreamed how famous his trophy would become until

he had it scored at a Game Commission official scoring session. Livingston's 202-pound, 20-point

buck took first place in Pennsylvania's non-typical archery category, with a score of 195-0. □

Nontypical White-tailed Deer- Archery

Rank/Hunter		Hometown	County Taken	Year	Score
1	Livingston, Eugene W	Boswell	Westmoreland	1995	195-0
2	Landers, Matt	Jefferson Hills	Allegheny	2000	192-0
3	Lecorchick, Frank R	Barnesboro	Indiana	1996	186-0
4	Saxby, Clifford	Morrisville	Bucks	2000	174-0
5	Hedland, Ronald J	Erie	Erie	2000	167-7
6	Vekkel, Daniel	Uniontown	Fayette	1999	164-3
7	Barton, Terry	Narvon	Berks	1998	162-6
8	Dinkfelt, Gary	Plum Boro	Allegheny	1994	162-3
9	Angott, Donald	Greysville	Greene	1998	158-2
10	Eisenhauer, John	Lebanon	Lebanon	1997	152-3
11	Wison Jr, Thomas P	Valencia	Allegheny	2000	147-3
12	Anderson Jr, Robert	Spring Church	Armstrong	1999	142-6
13	Mitchell, David	Fogelsville	Lehigh	2000	142-4
14	Prusak, Thomas A	West Mifflin	Allegheny	1987	141-2

Typical White-Tailed Deer- Archery

* denotes current owner

Rank/Hunter		Hometown	County Taken	Year	Score
1	Muntz, Albert J	Havertown	Bucks	1995	174-7
2	Heckathorn, Michael	Grove City	Mercer	2000	171-6
3	*Hockenberry, John				
	*William Hockenberry	Mifflinburg	Northumberland	2000	163-1
4	Downing, Dennis	West Middlesex	Lawrence	1999	162-3
5	Winter, Robert M	Pittsburgh	Allegheny	2000	159-5
6	Mosier, Jack	Harbor Creek	Erie	2000	158-5
7	Henry, Lynn A	Rockwood	Somerset	1996	157-7
8	Misner, Daniel	Johnstown	Cambria	2000	157-6
9	Robison, Dale G	New Eagle	McKean	1998	157-4
10	Clawson, Roger	Templeton	Armstrong	1999	156-7
11	Rebich, Jeffrey	Aliquippa	Allegheny	2000	156-5
12	Whipkey, R Adrian	Holbrook	Greene	1998	156-0
13	Carr, Wallace	Cheswick	Allegheny	1996	154-0
14	Urbas, Daniel A	Wexford	Allegheny	1995	152-7
15	Taglieri, James M	Turtle Creek	Allegheny	1996	152-1
16	Car Jr, William A	Whitehall	Northampton	1997	150-4
17	Landman, Larry	Grindstone	Fayette	1999	149-7
18	Morgan, Kevin R	Pittsburgh	Allegheny	2000	149-4

19	Gondella, Dennis	Finleyville	Washington	1998	149-3
20	Car, William A	Whitehall	Northampton	2000	149-2
21	Blausen, Richard J	Verona	Allegheny	1996	147-7
22	Neyman, Wayne Paul	Dravosburg	Allegheny	1998	147-0
23	Blose, Gregory D	New Kingston	Armstrong	1999	146-5
24	Powers, William	Export	Westmoreland	1999	145-6
25	Moser, Thomas S	Pipersville	Chester	1996	145-4
26	Royal, Robert	Adamsville	Crawford	2000	145-1
27	Nau, Ronald	North Versailles	Allegheny	1997	144-2
28	Lening, Frederic G	Ottsville	Bucks	1998	143-7
29	Pennington, James	Leckrone	Fayette	1999	143-3
30	Mayberry, Mark	Mechanicsburg	Perry	1997	143-2
30	Zechman, Alan	Beavertown	Snyder	1996	143-2
32	Franklin, Curtiss N	Shickshinny	Luzerne	2000	143-1
33	Bayle, Duane T	New Alexandria	Westmoreland	2000	143-0
34	Anthony, Edmond W	Atlantic	Crawford	2000	142-7
34	Steigerwalt, Trevor L	New Ringgold	Schuylkill	1999	142-7
36	Kozlowski, Robert	Bethlehem	Monroe	1995	142-6
37	Knapik, Fred	Cherry Tree	Clearfield	1991	142-3
37	Spittler, Travis W	Pine Grove	Schuylkill	2000	142-3
39	Besser, Bob	Sharpsville	Mercer	1998	142-1
40	Buzzard, Brian	East Earl	Chester	2000	141-6
41	Carns, Frank	Latrobe	Westmoreland	2000	141-4
41	Francis, Robert A	Elysburg	Northumberland	2000	141-4
41	Schwalm, Terry	Hegins	Schuylkill	1997	141-4
41	Taglieri, James M	Turtle Creek	Allegheny	1998	141-4
45	Brady, Terry R	Perryopolis	Fayette	2000	141-3
45	McCall, Randy	Spangler	Somerset	1998	141-3
47	Horkey, Bob	Newark, DE	Chester	1998	141-0
48	Anderson, Terry	Franklin	Venango	2000	140-5
49	VanDenheuvel Jr, Fred	Export	Westmoreland	2000	140-0
50	Long, Arden D	Lebanon	Berks	2000	139-6
50	Sabock, Melvin M	Oakmont	Allegheny	1998	139-6
52	Hanratty, James P	McKeesport	Allegheny	1998	139-5
53	Aughenbaugh, Roger	West Chester	Chester	1993	139-1
54	Alldred, Jason	Elverson	Delaware	1999	138-3
55	Mallick, Francis	Frackville	Schuylkill	1998	138-2
56	Fillman, Joseph J	Wilkes Barre	Luzerne	1978	138-1
56	Marshall, Gary	Slatington	Lehigh	2000	138-1
58	Hardy, John C	Uniontown	Greene	1998	138-0
59	Hohmann, William	Volant	Lawrence	2000	137-7
60	Cipollone, David A	Pittsburgh	Allegheny	2000	137-4
60	Howie, Daniel E	Quakertown	Montgomery	1999	137-4
62	Lilley Jr, Joseph A	Waynesburg	Greene	2000	137-2
63	Grafer, Robert E	Murrysville	Clarion	1999	137-0
64	Carpenter, Gary L	Ephrata	Schuylkill	2000	136-7
64	Skutack, Peter J	Falls	Susquehanna	1998	136-7
66	Kwashnik, Mike J	Wilkes Barre	Bradford	2000	136-6
66	McElhinney, Dennis R	New Kingston	Allegheny	2000	136-6
68	Clemm, Chris S	Mechanicsburg	Dauphin	2000	136-4
69	Bartoletti Jr, Rich	Oakdale	Washington	1998	136-0
69	Maurer, Jim	Manheim	Schuylkill	1999	136-0

71	Anderson, James	Ligonier	Westmoreland	1997	135-7
72	Reed, John W	Midland	Beaver	1999	135-6
73	Hunt, David A	Conneaut Lake	Crawford	1996	135-4
73	Light, John P	Fredericksburg	Potter	2000	135-4
75	Cameron, Ricky	Slippery Rock	Butler	1999	135-1
76	Cutman, Robert	Dauphin	Dauphin	2000	135-0
76	Schoenly, Randy L	Alburtis	Berks	1990	135-0
78	Kendter, James A	Montoursville	Lycoming	1999	134-7
79	Heckman Jr, James E	Bentleyville	Allegheny	1999	134-6
79	Rhoads, Tony L	Frederick	Montgomery	1997	134-6
81	Terpack, Edward	McKees Rocks	Allegheny	1997	134-5
82	Krajewski, Chet	West Wyoming	Berks	1998	134-4
83	Long, Kurt	South Fork	Cameron	2000	134-3
84	Cron, Alan	Towanda	Bradford	1996	134-0
84	Reich, Ron	Latrobe	Westmoreland	1998	134-0
86	Keck, Nice W	Berwick	Columbia	1990	133-6
86	Wright, David A	Windber	Somerset	2000	133-6
88	Mitchell, David	Fogelsville	Lehigh	1999	133-5
89	Henry, Michael F	Johnstown	Cambria	2000	133-4
90	Anderson, Jim	Ligonier	Westmoreland	1999	133-3
91	Gates, Brad	Philadelphia	Montgomery	1997	133-2
92	Tolley, Richard	Erie	Erie	2000	132-6
92	Winter, Robert M	Pittsburgh	Allegheny	1997	132-6
94	Demko, Ray	Sweet Valley	Luzerne	1969	132-5
95	Alderson, William	Meadowlands	Washington	1994	132-4
95	Walker, James	Waynesburg	Greene	2000	132-4
95	Zuchowski, Robert	Wellsboro	Tioga	2000	132-4
98	Nace, Shawn	Newport	Perry	1990	132-3
99	Kuhns, Michael W	Bolivar	Westmoreland	2000	132-2
99	Miller, Charles	Slatington	Lehigh	1995	132-2
99	Rada Jr, Greg	Lebanon	Schuylkill	1999	132-2
102	Passanita, Neil J	Ebensburg	Indiana	2000	132-0
103	Knechtel, Diane M	Polk	Mercer	1998	131-7
104	Ruffing, Scott	Rector	Westmoreland	2000	131-6
105	Billig, David D	Orefield	Lehigh	1996	130-7
105	Rohrbaugh, Jeffrey L	Spring Grove	York	1998	130-7
107	Keeney, Gary G	Meshoppen	Wyoming	1998	130-6
108	Moser, Thomas S	Pipersville	Chester	1994	130-5
108	Wolfe, Joseph	Kane	McKean	2000	130-5
110	Ferringer, Charles H	Muncy	Lycoming	2000	130-4
111	Carr, Wallace	Cheswick	Allegheny	2001	130-3
112	Hayes, Fred L	Friendsville	Susquehanna	2000	130-2
113	Pennington, Mark R	Dayton	Armstrong	1996	130-1
114	Beckett, Joseph V	Ashtabula, OH	Erie	2000	129-7
114	Kintzel, Brian	Cressona	Schuylkill	1996	129-7
114	Sekuta, John	Greensburg	Westmoreland	1999	129-7
117	Nogay, Louis	Hermitage	Mercer	1999	129-6
118	Douylliez, Dan	Charleroi	Washington	2000	129-5
119	Frye, Allen	Harrisville	Butler	1996	129-4
120	Ahlborn, George	Ligonier	Westmoreland	2000	129-3
120	Bleckley, William P	Latrobe	Allegheny	2000	129-3
122	Levengood, Rob L	Fleetwood	Berks	1998	129-2

122	Sellers, Dan	New Cumberland	York	1997	129-2
124	Riddle, Terrence	Hunker	Westmoreland	2000	129-1
125	Taylor, Kelly	Monessen	Washington	2000	129-0
126	Groger Sr, Terry	Cochranton	Crawford	1999	128-7
126	Sorazio, Ronald	Derry	Westmoreland	2000	128-7
128	Miller, Timothy D	Franklin Park	Washington	1996	128-6
129	Bistline, Ronald	Grantville	Dauphin	1997	128-3
129	Little, Edward	Ashville	Cambria	1999	128-3
131	White, Michael	Canonsburg	Washington	2000	128-2
132	English, Dale	Hickory	Washington	1998	128-1
132	Seever, Richard L	Shelocta	Armstrong	1998	128-1
134	Emery, Brandon P	West Chester	Chester	2000	128-0
134	Harding, Jeff	Seward	Indiana	1996	128-0
136	Malawski, Ted	Towanda	Bradford	1992	127-7
137	Stiger, Jan	Trout Run	Lycoming	2000	127-6
137	Thomas, Matthew D	Clarks Summit	Wyoming	1995	127-6
139	Dauberman, Brian	Mifflinburg	Union	2000	127-4
139	Kleppinger, William B	Quakertown	Bucks	2000	127-4
141	Martonik, Michael	Wilcox	Elk	2000	127-3
142	Carr, Wallace	Cheswick	Allegheny	1997	127-2
142	Struchen, Timothy S	Girard	Erie	2000	127-2
144	Martin, Paul W	Unknown	Berks	2000	127-0
144	Nussbaum, Jesse	St Marys	Elk	1997	127-0
144	Shank, Eric	Lititz	Lancaster	1999	127-0
147	Bower, Ronald	Pleasant Unity	Westmoreland	1995	126-7
147	Groger Jr, Terry	Cochranton	Crawford	1998	126-7
149	Ross, Anthony J	Hazleton	Luzerne	2000	126-6
150	Gates, Bradley	Philadelphia	Chester	2000	126-5
150	Saulen, Andrew	Alexandria	Huntingdon	2000	126-5
150	Schuster II, William	Ferrell	Mercer	1994	126-5
153	Horn, Jerry	Sewickley	Allegheny	1998	126-4
154	Heidlebaugh, Wayne D	Seven Valleys	York	1996	126-3
154	Stangil, Dale E	Ferndale	Bucks	2000	126-3
156	Furness, Keith	Baden	Beaver	1998	126-1
157	Ficarotta, Ray	Morrisville	Bucks	1992	126-0
158	Blauser, Richard J	Verona	Allegheny	1995	125-7
158	Joens, Tim S	Stroudsburg	Monroe	2000	125-7
158	Knapik, Fred	Cherry Tree	Clearfield	2000	125-7
161	Markey, Richard	York	York	1999	125-6
162	Brensinger, Wayne	Chambersburg	Franklin	1994	125-5
163	Getgen, Scott	Muncy	Lycoming	2000	125-4
163	Hudson, Darryl R	Latrobe	Westmoreland	2000	125-4
163	Ryan, Anthony M	Belle Vernon	Fayette	1997	125-4
166	Miller, Gregory K	York	York	2000	125-2
167	Selestow, Gary	Fredericktown	Washington	1998	125-1
168	Clemm, Chris	Mechanicsburg	Dauphin	1995	125-0
169	Cooper, John F	Charleroi	Washington	2000	124-2
170	Resanovich, Nick	Jonestown	Lebanon	1995	124-1
170	Wolfe, Scott	Leck Kill	Northumberland	2000	124-1
172	Car, William A	Whitehall	Bucks	1995	124-0
173	Wright, Willard J	Dallas	Wyoming	1994	123-7
174	Bering, John	Myerstown	Lycoming	1994	123-6

175	Hofer, Stephanie	Duncannon	Perry	1989	123-5
176	Covolo, Richard	Rural Valley	Armstrong	1996	123-3
176	Matush, Mark	Fayette City	Washington	1999	123-3
178	Krzan, John J	Olyphant	Lackawanna	2000	123-2
179	Addleman, Wm Jay	Claysville	Washington	2000	123-0
179	Stauffer, Daniel A	Barto	Berks	2000	123-0
181	Car, Bill	Whitehall	Lehigh	1998	122-7
181	Gallow, Nathan	Towanda	Bradford	1999	122-7
183	Enfield, Guy	Felton	York	1996	122-6
183	Guthrie, Wyatt E	New Freeport	Greene	2000	122-6
183	Hostetler, Todde	Somerset	Somerset	2000	122-6
186	Oakes, Todd	Meadville	Crawford	2000	122-2
187	Riddle, Scott	Hunker	Westmoreland	2000	122-0
188	Anderson, Jim	Ligonier	Westmoreland	1995	121-7
188	Cangioli, Harry	Newport	Perry	1999	121-7
190	Nye, Ralph	Concord	Franklin	1995	121-6
191	Farmer, George A	Belle Vernon	Westmoreland	1999	121-5
191	Fitch, Eugene J	Scranton	Lackawanna	2000	121-5
191	Miller, Tom	Latrobe	Westmoreland	2000	121-5
194	Shubert, Dan	Greensboro	Greene	1997	121-4
195	Kaufman, Brad	Volant	Venango	2000	121-2
196	Ryan, William J	Forty Fort	Wyoming	1999	121-1
196	White, James A	Marianna	Greene	1998	121-1
198	Bordner, Mike	Tower City	Schuylkill	1999	121-0
199	Young, Jeff	Honey Brook	Berks	1996	120-7
200	Russell, Delmar	Newville	Cumberland	1995	120-6
201	Rasel, Fred	Amity	Washington	1999	120-4
202	Fenton, Timothy R	Lock Haven	Clinton	1999	120-3
202	Gates, Brad	Philadelphia	Philadelphia	1994	120-3
202	Moyer, Michael	Reinholds	Berks	2000	120-3
202	Rockwell, Gene P	Wyalusing	Bradford	1987	120-3
206	Cron, Alan	Towanda	Bradford	2001	120-2
206	Hall, William R	Apollo	Westmoreland	1999	120-2
208	Alexander, Lance	Ligonier	Westmoreland	2000	119-6
208	Thomas, Chris	Fayetteville	Franklin	1989	119-6
210	Fontaine, Michael J	Butler	Butler	1997	119-4
211	Cunningham, Ralph	Irwin	Westmoreland	1998	119-1
211	Donovan, John P	Warren	Warren	2000	119-1
211	Merriman, David E	Baden	Beaver	2000	119-1
214	Quinn III, Daniel J	Latrobe	Westmoreland	1999	119-0
214	Weise, Robert	Greensburg	Cambria	2000	119-0
216	Davis, Lewis W	North Bend	Clinton	1998	118-7
216	Hall, Charles	Lemont Furnace	Fayette	2000	118-7
218	Libengood, Todd	Youngwood	Westmoreland	2000	118-5
219	Horning, Michael	Morgantown	Berks	1996	118-4
220	Pochron, Greg	Oil City	Venango	1998	118-3
220	Russell, Delmar	Newville	Cumberland	1999	118-3
222	Tajc, Jerry C	Levittown	Bucks	1995	118-0
223	Burdyn, Richard A	Throop	Wayne	2000	117-7
223	Foust, Fabian	Bolivar	Westmoreland	1999	117-7
225	Anderson, Adam	Punxsutawney	Jefferson	2000	117-6
226	Sarver, Dale R	Evans City	Butler	1999	117-5

227	Bristor Jr, Halden W	Washington	Washington	2000	117-4
228	Mandarino, Charles	McCandless	Venango	1998	117-3
229	Bristor, Debra L	Washington	Washington	1998	117-1
229	Cron, Alan R	Towanda	Bradford	1995	117-1
231	Munden, Thomas A	Greensburg	Westmoreland	2000	116-7
232	Hanratty, Nicholas M	McKeesport	Allegheny	1999	116-5
233	Walker, Craig E	Vandergrift	Armstrong	2000	116-3
234	Patterson Jr, Kenneth E	Avella	Washington	1999	116-2
235	Eisenhauer, Brian A	Berwick	Northumberland	2000	116-1
235	Horchler, David	Millersburg	Tioga	1997	116-1
235	Reese, William L	Ligonier	McKean	1997	116-1
235	Valiquette Jr, Harry	White Deer	Lycoming	2000	116-1
239	Ferringer, Jack	Titusville	Venango	2000	116-0
239	Gilbert, Duane A	Chambersburg	Franklin	1994	116-0
239	Kukorlo, Jim R	Berwick	Columbia	1998	116-0
242	Miller, Rick	New Holland	Lancaster	1999	115-7
243	Strohl, Shawn A	Tunkhannock	Luzerne	1997	115-6
244	Pigford, Roger H	Cecil	Washington	1995	115-5
245	Law, James O	Clarks Mills	Allegheny	1996	115-4
246	Fassinger, Scott	Lower Burrell	Westmoreland	1996	115-3
247	Hamborsky, Vince	Connellsville	Armstrong	1999	115-2
248	Stover, Robert	Gardners	Cumberland	2000	115-1

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Brier Patch Buck

By Garry Forgy

MY THREE SONS, Eric, Ben and Darren, and I spotted a big 8-point on my dairy farm a few days before the 2000 season. So, needless to say, our excitement grew as the season drew near. Turned out, though, our neighbor bagged the big deer at 7:30 on opening morning. Our season was over, it seemed, as the 8-point was the only nice buck we had seen. In fact, we didn't see even a single deer on the first two days of the season.

On Saturday I came in late from morning chores and noticed that the boys were not ready to go hunting. Worse, they didn't even seem interested in going out. And because the big buck had been killed I, too, figured I had better things to do. I had begun a remodeling job in the house, so that's where I went to work.

Although it was cold and windy, it was sunny, so about 11 o'clock my wife went out to hang up some laundry and

noticed a deer down by the railroad underpass. When she told us about it my sons became excited, because on this particular Saturday, junior hunting license holders could take antlerless deer. We all went outside to see the deer, but it was gone. We waited a little while, thinking the deer might cross the field behind our house, but we saw nothing. I even asked my wife if she was sure she had seen it at all.

I thought the deer might possibly be in a small patch of woods next to the railroad tracks. On Monday I had walked through this same patch with great difficulty, because it was thick with greenbriers.

This day I placed my sons along a fencerow next to a field where I thought the deer would come out, and then I entered the woods from the other side to push it towards them. I was about 200 yards into the woods when a deer stood up and started moving off. I immediately saw antlers and knew that I could shoot. For some reason I shouted, "Here he comes, boys," and then

squeezed off a shot from my Remington 700 .30-06. The shot slowed the deer down dramatically, but I shot three more times, hitting it behind the shoulder. I could see the buck's rack above the briars, and then the thicket swallowed it up. That's when I got excited.

I shouted to the boys to get down to the deer, because I was out of cartridges and didn't know if it was down for good. I also had 75 yards of briars to fight through to reach it.

The boys and I found the deer at about the same time, and we couldn't believe our eyes. Points were sticking up everywhere. We counted 32 the first time, but I didn't believe it, so I counted a second time and came up with 32 again. With tears running down my face I said, "Boys, God smiled on us today."

The boys and I were dumbfounded. We never knew this buck was around.

After tagging and field-dressing the huge buck, my oldest son, Eric, and I struggled to get it through the briars, while Ben and Darren carried the guns. We got the deer to the edge of my field, and then

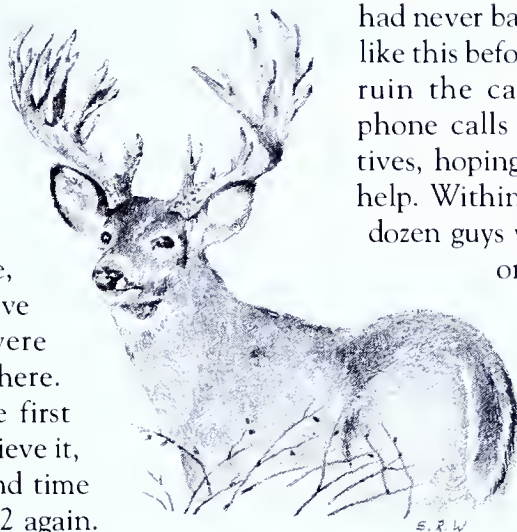
decided to get the skid loader from the barn; he was just too heavy to drag anymore.

My youngest son, Darren, ran ahead to tell his mother that I had shot a 32-point buck. My wife, Betty, didn't believe him, so I had to tell her myself. Darren and I got the loader and we brought the deer into the barn. I was afraid to skin it out, because I had never bagged a deer anything like this before and didn't want to ruin the cape. I made several phone calls to friends and relatives, hoping to find someone to help. Within 20 minutes about a dozen guys were at my farm. No

one could believe the size of the buck's antlers. Within an hour the news had spread to McVeytown, 10 miles away. That afternoon and evening about 75

people came to the farm to see the deer. On Sunday afternoon and evening about 200 people came to see the big buck.

At a Game Commission scoring session in April, my buck scored 197 3/8, and to this day we still have people asking to see the big rack. □



COVER PAINTING BY MARK ANDERSON

PICTURES SPEAK louder than words, and what can depict our hunting heritage more so than this month's cover. The early American hunter drawing a bead on the whitetail buck across the mountain brook in the shadows of the hemlock trees is about as traditional as you can get. But, wait, that hunter just might be a modern hunter, because Pennsylvania is the only state that has a deer season exclusively for flintlock shooters. The season was established for those who want to experience the challenge our forefathers did.

Limited edition prints of "Winter's Promise" are available from the artist. Prints measure 19 x 23 inches (image size is 16 x 20) and are printed on premium grade acid free paper. Edition is limited to 350 signed and numbered prints, and 35 artist's proofs. Remarques are available upon request. Price, delivered, is \$55, \$80 for artist's proofs. Order from the artist at 348 Deer Creek Valley Road, Tarentum, PA 15084.

I knew the buck had a nice rack, but when I reached it I couldn't believe my eyes. It was without question, the biggest buck I had ever seen.

The Punxsy Airport Buck

By James D. Rowles



JIM ROWLES with his huge buck that scores 203-1 in the nontypical white-tailed deer gun category. The deer was taken near Punxsutawney, in Jefferson County.

I GREW UP in a little place called Bells Mills, about three miles out of Punxsutawney. I've been hunting in this area since I was 12, with my dad, brothers and friends. I retired from the coal mines about six years ago, so these days I spend as much time as I can in the woods.

For the 2000 buck season opener, my brother, Fred, came up from White

Mills, and we decided to hunt in the Allegheny National Forest. Fred missed two bucks, and I passed up a 6-point, and then we hunted different areas around home for that first week.

On Saturday, December 2, we decided to hunt with my son Rod, grandson Dustin, my brother Rick and my dad, John. We left my place about 6 a.m., and Fred dropped me off at the bottom of Davis's hill, near a small airport. He picked up Dad and they went down to their spot, while everyone else went to their favorite areas. I walked up the hill to a tree where I like to

stand, and at 7:15 six deer came up over the ridge. They were all does, however, and after milling around for about 10 minutes, they ambled off back down the ridge.

Not long after, two more does headed my way, and right behind them I spotted a nice buck. I picked out a small opening to shoot, but the deer stopped before they reached it. I had a clear shot at the buck's neck, and confident I could make it, I raised

my Remington .30-06 Model 700, settled the crosshairs and pulled the trigger. The deer dropped in its tracks.

I knew it had a nice rack, but when I reached the buck I couldn't believe my eyes. It was without question, the biggest buck I had ever seen. I sat down on a log and just looked at it for about 10 minutes. That's when I realized that it had to be the big buck everyone had been talking about.

There had been plenty of bowhunters hunting this particular buck, and a lot of hunters after it during the first week of buck season. I couldn't believe that a stump sitter like me got him.

I dragged the deer about 200 yards, to a field where my son and grandson met me. They were more excited than I was, and they took the deer down to the truck, along

Route 119. People stopped along the road to see the big buck. When we got to Punxsutawney, shop owners closed their stores so they could get a look at the "Airport Buck." When we took it to Jordons Taxidermy, people from all over were there waiting to see it.

The following Monday the *Punxsy Spirit* newspaper ran a photo of the deer and sold every paper in two hours. The paper ended up running the photo again the next day. My buck was the biggest thing to hit Punxsy since the famous groundhog. December 2, 2000, was the biggest hunting day of my life, and although people tell me I'll never be able to top my big buck, I'll still be out there hunting each season, giving it a try. □

Nontypical White-tailed Deer- Gun

* denotes current owner

Rank/Hunter		Hometown	County Taken	Year	Score
1	Rowles, Jim	Troutville	Jefferson	2000	203-1
2	Forgy, Garry	McVeytown	Mifflin	2000	197-3
3	Beam, Gary	Perkasie	Bucks	1985	194-0
4	Leggett, Lawrence				
	*William Leggett Sr.	Ransomville, NY	McKean	1905	185-1
5	Edwards, James D	Shaler	Allegheny	2000	184-2
6	Sipe, Rick	Gardners	Cumberland	1995	184-1
7	Boyce, Jason	Oakdale	Allegheny	1997	181-7
8	Rainier, Joseph D	Kempton	Berks	1996	179-6
9	Buck, Sean	Elizabethtown	Lancaster	1998	174-7
10	Hudson, John M	McKees Rocks	Beaver	1999	174-3
11	Potts, Jody L	Conneautville	Crawford	2000	172-6
12	Dhanse, Daniel D	McDonald	Washington	1998	171-5
13	Stiver, Robert NG	Lock Haven	Clinton	2000	171-0
14	Unknown				
	*Fred Connor	Mechanicsburg	Perry	1940	170-3
15	Graham, Russell	Erie	Erie	1999	170-0
16	Reid, Brian T	Penns Park	Bucks	1999	169-2
17	Shafron, John	Youngstown	Westmoreland	1997	168-7
18	Magill, Winfield S	Doylestown	Bucks	1998	168-5
19	Drake, Garrett J	Slippery Rock	Butler	2000	167-0
20	Quagliani, Kenneth J	St Marys	Elk	1994	160-5

Swamp Monster

By Joseph E. Mindick

THE WEATHER was unusually warm for late November, and I was hoping it would continue for the next few days. Even so, at this early hour, a chill was setting in. I was on stand near a Luzerne County swamp as the sun was rising on the opening day of the 1998 bear season. This was my third year hunting with the Four Seasons Sportsmen's Association.

The hunting plan was as usual. Some of the members would use their opening day buck stands to start off the bear season. This year, we had only 13 members on our bear roster for opening day. Later that morning, as we were setting up our first drive, I commented to the group, "We'll be the Lucky 13."

I wasn't feeling very lucky, though. I don't hunt deer in Luzerne County, so I was using an old stand not used by anybody else anymore. The stand was facing directly into the rising sun, and 50 yards in front of it there was a dense growth of pine trees. All things combined, shooting conditions were poor.

On the bright side, I knew that by 9 a.m. we would leave our stands and meet at the woodpile on Sullivan's Trail. As I was sitting there contemplating the new season, a small bear came out of the pine thicket. I put the rifle up only to have the sun right in the scope. I dropped to iron sights below, but too late. It was a blur, then gone, and I could not get off a shot.

By the time we congregated at the woodpile, the sun was getting quite warm and everyone was talking about what they had seen. I was the only one who had actually seen a bear, though.

But when the drives start is when

the hunting really begins. Two swamps are on our property, and there is almost always a bear in one if not both. Our hunting plan is simple: some drive, some stand. The drivers normally use hip boots, a necessity because the water in some areas of these swamps can be even higher than hip boots. At this point, we set up our standers and drivers, and alternately drive both swamps. Our crew captain, Rob Davis, decided to drive the big swamp first, because that's near where I had seen the bear earlier that morning. Both swamps are bordered on one side by the same road, so we always start at the road edge and drive through one swamp or the other toward the hardwoods at the end.

We had barely started our first drive when a shot rang out. Chris Paolone had taken the first bear. We finished the drive and then all went to see Chris's bear, and I knew right away that his was not the bear I had seen from my stand in the early morning. By now the day was warming up, so we decided to take a break and eat lunch — and many of us changed into lighter clothing for the afternoon drives.

The two swamps are separated by a few hundred yards of high ground, and driven bears will often double back over from one to the other. Knowing this, we decided to drive the small swamp after our break.

Back at the woodpile, we were setting up for the next drive. We knew there was at least one more bear in the area, the one I had seen, and it was possible he had been pushed into the small swamp. I was getting ready to drive when Rob suggested I stand. For the last two seasons, I had been mostly driving, so I said I would like to stand this time.

From my position above the small swamp, I could hear the drivers getting

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North America



closer. And then I saw it. The bear was clearly visible, and to my surprise, it was coming straight up the small hill towards me. It approached at a fast walk, and I thought to myself that at this angle, it would be close enough for a handgun shot. But then two things happened to change my mind. First, I realized how large this animal was and a handgun, even my .44 Magnum, could be risking a wounded animal. Second, the bear had cleared the swamp and was still about 60 yards away when it became aware of my presence and made an abrupt turn. So much for a handgun: I shouldered the Model 70 Winchester and squeezed the trigger. At the recoil, I saw the bear drop. I chambered another round and watched

as the bear slowly regained its feet. Not wanting him to get back into the swamp, I fired again and it dropped. For a few seconds everything was still. I slowly walked down to him and arrived about the same time as the drivers and other standers.

The next thing I knew, I was shaking hands with all the guys and Walt was offering to field-dress the bear for me. Needing a little time to settle down, I told Walt to go ahead.

My Model 70 7mm Rem. Mag. with a 160-grain Sierra spitzer boattail bullet did the job. As the bear was being field-dressed, I saw that either shot would have quickly killed it.

Now it was time to get my trophy out of the woods and to a check station. Bill Kratz was able to get his 4-wheel drive truck about 70 yards above us. With the help of all the guys,

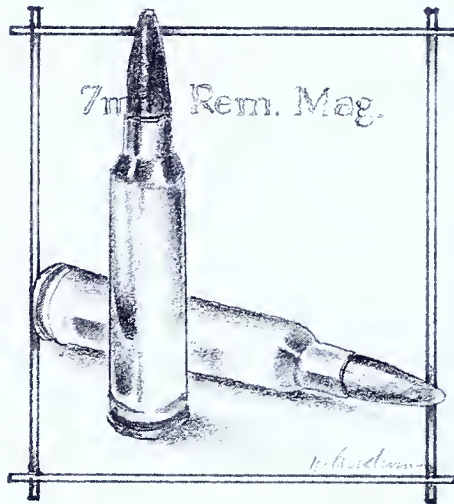
we built a pole type carrier from branches and rope. Then, six at a time, we carried it up to the truck. Once there, we took pictures and a break before going back to camp and then on to a check station. There they pulled some teeth and weighed the big male in at 448 pounds — estimated live weight at 528. I learned later that my bear was 17 years 10 months old. The day ended with a good meal and some celebrating, but not too much, because we would do more driving the next day before all heading home.

Several days later, I was at Stranix Taxidermy in Doylestown, making arrangements for a bear rug with the owner, Mark Stranix. He suggested that I could have a trophy class black bear and recommended that I have the skull properly cleaned and then officially measured. On August 13, 1999, I had

the skull measured by Doug Killough at the PGC Southeast Region Office. It came to 22 13/16. Later, I was advised this could be a Pennsylvania record.

Later that year, I registered the skull measurements with the Boone and Crockett Club of North America and in April 2001, I was invited to the Boone and Crockett Club 24th Big Game Awards Presentation in Springfield, Missouri. The skull was on display, along with many other North America trophies, at the Bass Pro Shop from May 9 to June 16. My bear was awarded First Place in the Black Bear Category for the 1998-2000 Award Period. It's currently tied for fifth place in the All-Time North America category.

Preparation, hard work, and patience are essential for successful hunting, but I think teamwork by my hunting partners and a little luck were also contributors to harvesting my trophy bear. □



Black Bear — Gun

* denotes current owner

Rank/Hunter	Hometown	County Taken	Year	Score
1	Mindick, Joseph E	Warrington	Luzerne	1998 22-13
2	Deneen, Jim	Hyndman	Bedford	1995 22-10
3	Drenning, Norman	Hollsopple	Somerset	2000 22-08
3	Vasey, Thomas Q	Doylestown	Monroe	1995 22-08
5	Minahan, Fred	Glenmoore	Monroe	1996 22-07
6	Devore, William	Washington	Clearfield	1993 22-01
7	Zerbe, John	Mechanicsburg	Lycoming	1997 22-00
8	Hendricks, Glen J	New Ringgold	Schuylkill	1998 21-15
9	Brown, Christopher	Pen Argil	Pike	1999 21-13
10	Kozar, Jeffrey	Centre Hall	Lackawanna	1998 21-12
11	Colliflower, John	Hagerstown, MD	Bedford	2000 21-11
11	Snyder, Marty	Three Springs	Huntingdon	1998 21-11
13	Morey, Reynold L	Northampton	Pike	1998 21-10
14	Koller, John	Fleetwood	Sullivan	Unkn 21-08
14	Magno, Donald W	New Castle	McKean	1992 21-08
14	Somp, Walter A	Ottsville	Pike	1995 21-08
14	Toth, Wayne E	Munhall	Westmoreland	1993 21-08
14	Watkins, Steve E	Towanda	Bradford	2000 21-08
19	Harkless, Thomas W	Newton Falls, OH	Forest	1995 21-06
20	Egan III, Raymond A	Sewickley	Forest	1992 21-05
20	Geer, Rodney	Lake Como	Wayne	1994 21-05
22	Ritchey Jr, Harold L	Claysburg	Bedford	2000 21-04
23	Druckenmiller, Rick H	Northampton	Pike	2000 21-03
23	Rogari, James J	Carbondale	Wayne	1997 21-03
25	Dewald, Frank	Muncy	Lycoming	1995 21-02
25	Loughrey, Thomas W	Kittanning	Armstrong	1996 21-02
25	Yenzi, John	Reynoldsville	Clinton	1998 21-02
28	Seaman, Paul S	Williamsport	Lycoming	1972 21-01
28	Weaver, Shawn	Loganton	Clinton	2000 21-01
30	Alles, Martin J	Wyalusing	Bradford	1996 21-00
30	Brogan, Daniel	Norwood	Clearfield	2000 21-00
30	Butlor, Michael J	Montoursville	Lycoming	1998 21-00
30	Noll, Melvin	Newport	Tioga	1997 21-00
30	Spotts, Jim	Cogan Station	Lycoming	1996 21-00
35	Barnes Jr, Robert R	Somerset	Somerset	1997 20-15
35	Beatty, John E	Rochester	Warren	1999 20-15
35	Boone, Rickey J	Howard	Centre	2000 20-15
35	Bouch Jr, Clinton	Seward	Westmoreland	1995 20-15
35	Czarkowski, David J	Scranton	Lackawanna	2000 20-15
35	Ream, Robert	Indiana	Indiana	1995 20-15
35	Shank, William M	Bolivar	Westmoreland	2000 20-15
35	Weaver, Harold R	New Holland	Tioga	1992 20-15
43	Sever, Gary R	Bassett, NE	Westmoreland	1997 20-14
44	Beatty, John E	Rochester	Warren	1999 20-13
44	Eans, Richard P	Connellsville	Somerset	1996 20-13

44	Lucks Jr, Andrew	Youngsville	Warren	1996	20-13
44	Minnich, Gregory G	Kirkwood	Potter	1998	20-13
44	Robinette, Daniel G	Dover	Bedford	2000	20-13
49	Ramirez, Ricardo	Spring Grove	Lycoming	1996	20-12
50	Blair Jr, Raymond F	Rices Landing	Clearfield	1999	20-11
50	Kinney Jr, Ron	Hunlock Creek	Wyoming	1997	20-11
50	Rozanski, Gary A	Mountain Top	Luzerne	1995	20-11
50	Wright, Derek	Cassville	Huntingdon	1996	20-11
54	Rhone, Frank T	Shickshinny	Columbia	1995	20-10
55	Brooks, Glenn D	Connellsville	Somerset	2000	20-09
55	Johnson, Paul	Renovo	Clinton	1996	20-09
55	Lane, Todd R	Ashland	Wyoming	1999	20-09
55	Newell, Joseph L	Noxen	Sullivan	1995	20-09
59	Glick, Neil	Mifflintown	Tioga	1999	20-08
59	Larosa, Michael	Acme	Fayette	1996	20-08
59	Senft, David P	Hamburg	Lycoming	1995	20-08
62	Nauman, Marvin	Lebanon	Cameron	1997	20-07
62	Ostrosky, John W	Mineral Point	Cambria	1998	20-07
64	Bassler, Derek	Martinsburg	Bedford	Unkn	20-06
64	Dietrich, Ed	Pine Grove	Mifflin	1996	20-06
64	Johnson, Tony A	Towanda	Bradford	1998	20-06
64	Reed, Mervine W	Milesburg	Centre	1999	20-06
68	Feathers, David	Martinsburg	Blair	1999	20-05
68	Furness, James T	Ambridge	McKean	1996	20-05
70	Desko, Alan	Polk	Venango	1998	20-04
70	Dlugos, Donald J	Latrobe	Somerset	1999	20-04
70	Groger Jr, Terry	Cochrannton	Venango	1995	20-04
70	Little, Randy J	Morrisdale	Clearfield	1999	20-04
70	Luther, James D	Ligonier	Westmoreland	1998	20-04
70	Metzger, Steve E	Milford	Pike	1998	20-04
70	Wade Jr, Merle	Shunk	Lycoming	2000	20-04
70	Weiser, Steve T	Hummelstown	Tioga	1999	20-04
78	Esh, Daniel M	Newburg	Bedford	1996	20-03
78	Hutzell, Delmas A	Somerset	Somerset	1995	20-03
78	Schall, Timothy P	Kittanning	Elk	1999	20-03
81	Carlson, Jon	Emporium	Cameron	2000	20-02
81	Martin, Paul M	Richland	Centre	Unkn	20-02
81	Snyder, Robert B	Newville	Potter	1997	20-02
81	Sweigart, Kenneth L	Newmanstown	Sullivan	1997	20-02
85	Brandt, Brian	Lebanon	Sullivan	1998	20-01
85	Garron, Michael	Pittston	Luzerne	1996	20-01
87	Ashton, Rickey R	Spring Grove	McKean	1999	20-00
87	Duvuvei, Robert L	Belle Vernon	Clearfield	2000	20-00
87	Emeigh, Todd	Claysburg	Huntingdon	1994	20-00
87	Hanzely, Joseph	DuBois	Clearfield	1998	20-00
87	Kerver, Jeffery P	Alburtis	Potter	2000	20-00
87	Smith, Jerry M	New Stanton	Venango	1999	20-00
93	Galloway Jr, James B	Elizabeth	Clearfield	1998	19-15
93	Stover, Daryl J	Mill Hall	Clinton	1997	19-15
95	Amos, Arthur W	Mercer	Warren	1971	19-14
95	Woods, Kenneth C	Mercer	Warren	2000	19-14
97	Beidler, Albert	Wernersville	Sullivan	1995	19-13

97	McCune II, William A	Connellsville	Fayette	1998	19-13
97	Metcalfe, James H	Mechanicsburg	Potter	1995	19-13
100	Andrews, Patrick M	Erie	Jefferson	1999	19-11
100	Moser, Thomas S	Pipersville	Lycoming	1992	19-11
100	Ross, Chad M	Coal Center	Fayette	1998	19-11
100	Swedler, Andy	Johnstown	Somerset	1998	19-11
104	McDermott, Richard A	Red Lion	Clearfield	1996	19-09
105	Kerstetter, Robert	Shamokin	Lycoming	1996	19-08
105	Minjock, John H	Monongahela	Somerset	1996	19-08
105	Shrauder, Dennis A	Enola	Cameron	1998	19-08
105	Slagle Jr, Gerald	Dover	Clinton	1997	19-08
105	Swierczynski, Justin K	Tunkhannock	Susquehanna	2000	19-08
105	Zerbe Jr, Paul F	Mifflinburg	Union	1979	19-08
111	Lindberg, Jay	Greensburg	Jefferson	1998	19-07
112	Aikey, David R	Montoursville	Lycoming	2000	19-06
112	Kreiser II, Edward	Pine Grove	Clinton	1998	19-06
112	Shallenberger, Charles A	Connellsville	Fayette	1995	19-06
115	Fry, Dale				
	*Larry Yoder	Muncy	Lycoming	2000	19-05
115	McChesney, Gregory	Latrobe	Somerset	1998	19-05
117	Gerhard, David A	Rockwood	Somerset	2000	19-04
117	Wright, Derek	Cassville	Huntingdon	1998	19-04
119	Giebner, Edwin B	Sandy Lake	Elk	1981	19-03
120	Burns Sr, Joseph F	Pottsville	Schuylkill	1997	19-02
120	Mackins, Joe	Brookville	Jefferson	1995	19-02
120	Orlowski, David L	Austin	Potter	2000	19-02
123	Byler, Mark A	Guys Mills	Crawford	1994	19-01
123	Oakes, Jared	Hollidaysburg	Blair	2000	19-01
123	Waller, Jonathan	Carlisle	Potter	1997	19-01
126	Nauman, Lindsey A	Hamburg	Cameron	1996	19-00

Black Bear - Archery

Rank/Hunter		Hometown	County Taken	Year	Score
1	Fingado, Richard	St Marys	Elk	2000	19-05

PENNSYLVANIA BLACK BEAR MANAGEMENT TIMELINE

1905 — Black bears protected
 1925 — Bear cubs protected
 1970 — Bear season closed for the first time in 36 years
 1973 — Bear check stations established
 1980 — Protection removed for bear cubs
 1981 — Bear hunting license established; first allocation was 125,000 licenses
 1983 — Bear season harvest exceeds 1,000 for first time — 1,529
 1989 — Bear license allocation eliminated

The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.

— Gandhi

In Search of the Best

By Larissa Rose

PGC Information Writer

Photos by the author

“Looks like we got something.” As the Bronco bounced up the rutted lane, I wished I had worn my glasses so I could have made out from a distance what critter had gotten a little too nosy while out hunting the familiar fields.

“What’s it look like, Peter?” asked Russ.

“Gray fox,” came the reply.

Good, that’s exactly what we were looking for. We parked about 30 feet from the animal, and Russ and I approached it while Peter stayed back to begin filling out the paper work.

As we got closer, the fox tried to run, was held back by the snare around its paw, yet jumped up immediately to try and escape again. Finally, he stood still, baring his tiny, but razor-sharp teeth as he hissed at us. After a mo-

ment of admiring the beauty of the animal, and fearing the aggression its fear produced, Russ asked me if I was ready. I nodded and put my fingertips into my ears to dull the quick crack of the .22 revolver.

Russ removed the animal from the snare and placed it on the ground beside Peter. While Peter recorded information about the catch — leg caught, condition of animal, etc. — I examined it. I’d only ever caught glimpses of foxes as they darted across fields, and now, being so close to one, I took in all of its features. The dark fur looked more black and brown than gray, and the tail was just as bushy and full as I’d imagined.

The fox had been trapped as part of a program headed by the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (IAFWA) to develop Best Management Practices (BMPs) for regulated trapping in the United States. According to the Furbearer Resources Technical Work Group under the IAFWA, “a BMP is a method to improve an activity by developing recommendations based on sound scientific information while maintaining practicability.” In other words, the goal of the study is to identify and promote the best technology available to capture wildlife. The BMPs address the welfare of the animals, the efficiency and selectivity of the traps, the safety of the traps to people, and the practical application of various types of traps.

The program was started in 1996; trap

THIS GRAY FOX was trapped as part of a program headed by the IAFWA to develop Best Management Practices for regulated trapping in the U.S.



tests began in 1997, and the first BMPs are expected this year, and will be provided to state agencies and trappers for incorporation into trapper education and wildlife management programs. Since 1997, 31 state wildlife agencies have participated in the field tests of 42 commercially available restraining devices, including innovative trap designs, cage traps, foot snares, modifications to standard trap designs (padding, offset jaws and double jaws), and commonly used models.

In 2001, 16 states participated in the study, and a list of their targeted species follows. The Northeast states (Maine, New York, Pennsylvania and Vermont) mainly trapped for red foxes. In Pennsylvania, however, only one team — in the northwest — trapped for red foxes, while the other three teams trapped for gray foxes. The South region (Alabama, Virginia and New Mexico) trapped for gray foxes, while the West (Oregon, South Dakota, Washington and Wyoming) tried for coyotes. In the Midwest (Kansas, Michigan and Oklahoma), bobcats were the quarry, and New Hampshire and West Virginia trapped for, respectively, beaver and raccoons.

Volunteer trappers, who are compensated for the animals they trap, conduct testing during the state-regulated trapping season. Technicians are assigned to accompany each trapper to record trapline data. They also prepare carcasses for shipment to one of two veterinary laboratories that will complete necropsies and injury assessments, in order to discover which traps and capture devices do the best job of reducing injuries to animals.

In Pennsylvania, the Game Commission coordinates the testing, but the trappers and technicians who perform the field work were selected and are annually approved by the Pennsylvania Trappers' Association's BMP committee.

The International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (IAFWA) was founded in 1902 as an organization of public agencies charged with the protection and management of North America's fish and wildlife resources. The Association's governmental members include the fish and wildlife agencies of the states, provinces and federal governments of the U.S., Canada and Mexico. The IAFWA has been a key organization in promoting sound resource management and strengthening federal, state and private cooperation in protecting and managing fish and wildlife and their habitats.

On the day I helped check the trapline in Susquehanna County, I was with Russ Carman, who made his living trapping and manufacturing scents for trappers, and technician Peter Accardi, a Baptist minister who enjoys trapping. We visited the 18 stops along the trapline, each of which contained two sets of the same type of trap. Pennsylvania is testing three types of traps this year: the Belisle foot snare; the Bridger 1.75 with offset jaws; and a 1½ Victor with padded jaws.

All carcasses are examined by veterinary laboratories to determine which traps do the best job of reducing injuries to animals. Technician PETER ACCARDI prepares a fox for shipping.



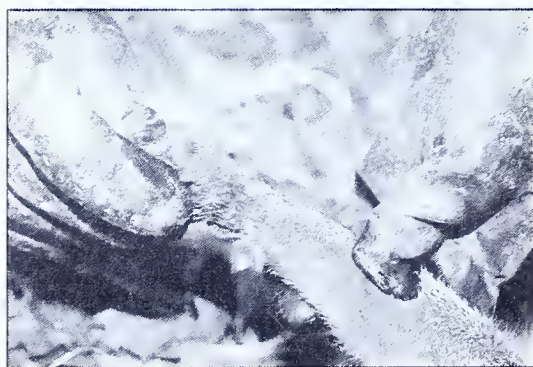


PENNSYLVANIA tested three different types of traps in 2001. Left to right are the Bridger 1.75 with offset jaws; a 1½ Victor with padded jaws; and the Belisle foot snare.

Because the animals already had their winter coats on, the warm weather during my visit kept most of them from moving much. As a result, most of the traps we checked were untouched. The first trap had been set off, and Russ determined from a few hairs on the trap that a coyote had been held there for a while, but had managed to escape. The third stop also revealed a sprung trap, but Russ thought it just hadn't been set properly, as there was no sign of an animal having been near it. (In defense of Russ's history as a trapper, the mis-set trap was a Belisle foot snare, which isn't legal in Pennsylvania, so he has had little experience with it.)

It wasn't until the seventh stop that we finally came across the fox. It had been captured by the Belisle foot snare, and after close examination of its paw, I couldn't believe the results.

AFTER BEING held by a Belisle foot snare, this fox's paw showed no physical damage whatsoever.



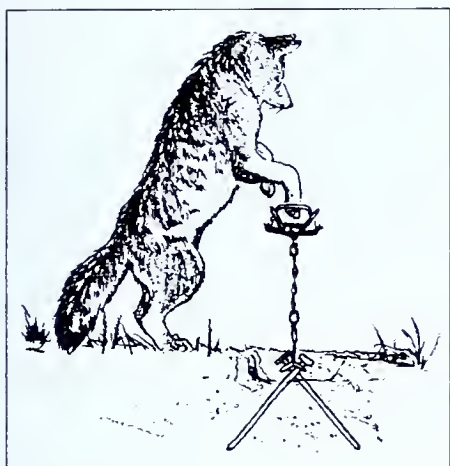
With all of the thrashing the fox had done when we approached it and, I imagined, the many attempts to escape after the initial capture, I expected there to at least be a little blood where the snare had held the paw. But, to my surprise, there was virtually no damage. I could clearly see where the snare had been around the leg, but by brushing the fur around, it was obvious that there was no damage whatsoever to the skin. I couldn't say how much pain this had caused the animal, but by the looks of things, it was minimal, if any.

This has been the case throughout much of the study. Pennsylvania began participating in the field testing in 1998, and that year and in 1999, tested three different types of traps for coyotes. The four teams captured 53 in 1998 and, despite warm conditions, another 35 in 1999. Based on results from these studies, a draft BMP for trapping eastern coyotes has been developed and is currently being reviewed by wildlife management agencies and trapper associations.

In all, 12 different traps were tested for coyotes, nine of which are being recommended in the draft BMP. They include different designs, including coil-spring traps with plain, offset and padded jaws, as well as a coil-spring activated foot snare.

After two years of trapping coyotes in Pennsylvania, trappers and biologists recommended techniques for trapping specifically for eastern coyotes that are included in the draft BMP. For example, proper pan tension is important when targeting a species. It should take about four pounds of weight to trigger a trap set for coyotes. (The pan will likely need readjustment after each capture.)

Trap strength is also an important factor to consider when trapping for a specific species. Sufficient trap strength is needed to hold a coyote's foot. Some traps may perform better with the addition of two springs, commonly referred to as "four-coiling." The BMP provides recommended spring strengths for each designated trap.



COYOTES ARE strong animals, and extensive measures should be taken to make sure they can't pull staked traps out of the ground. Cross-staking is a method that can be used to secure the trap and ensure the coyote won't escape.

Another important aspect of trapping that must be considered is the anchoring system. Coyotes are strong animals and can easily pull out stakes that are not properly anchored. Stakes must be long enough to prevent the coyote from pulling it out of the ground. If there is doubt that a stake will hold, use two in a cross-staking method to keep them from moving.

Perhaps the most important factor to consider when setting traps is the location. Trappers should choose set locations that will minimize the coyote's exposure to domestic animals and human activities, such as trails used by hunters and hikers. Sites should also avoid fences or other objects that might result in injury by entanglement.

In 2000, all four teams tested four types of traps for capturing red foxes, and at the end of the two weeks, successfully trapped 50. In 2001, with only one team targeting red foxes and the other three trapping for grays, 45 red foxes were trapped, as well as 36 gray foxes.

While the BMPs for each species will be used throughout the United States, they may also be used by other countries to improve their wildlife programs. They will also be used to address international com-

mitments to identify and promote the use of the most humane traps and trapping methods for capturing wildlife in North America.

So far, most of the traps that have been tested have produced the same results as the Belisle foot snare that the nosy fox got trapped by. Little physical damage is done to the animal, and apparently it doesn't feel much, if any, pain. But Russ already knew that. He's been trapping for most of his life, and told me about trapping a fox when he was 17 that had mange. There was only a small patch of hair on the fox's tail, and the rest of the animal was covered with sores and scabs. When he took it home, his father had a fit because he didn't want any of his animals becoming infected with the horrible disease. Russ came to a conclusion that day: "I may cause 'em some pain, but nature causes a whole lot more." □



RUSS CARMAN puts the finishing touches on a set for the BMP Trap Study. The experienced trapper spent years trapping and making scents, and has participated in the study since its start in Pennsylvania in 1998.



FORD PARKED his truck up on the hard road, deciding to retrace his old route to Spencer's farm, the one he often took as a boy living just over the hill. He cut down through the woods where a few reefs of snow remained, then came out onto a dirt lane which he followed until he found an old deer trail that wound down through a field of goldenrod. The trail diverged then at a small, wild orchard overlooking the farm.

The damp February air held the briny odor of dying winter. In the mist-shrouded bottomland the farm had the two-dimensional appearance of stage scenery. The gabled roof of the farmhouse protruded sharply, and only the crowns of some black willows etched the sky. A crow jerked across the hollow like a paper cutout on a string. The gray sky — the canvas backdrop of this upland stage — tore silently, flooding the hillside with light. Ford stood in the warmth until the seam mended and then went on.

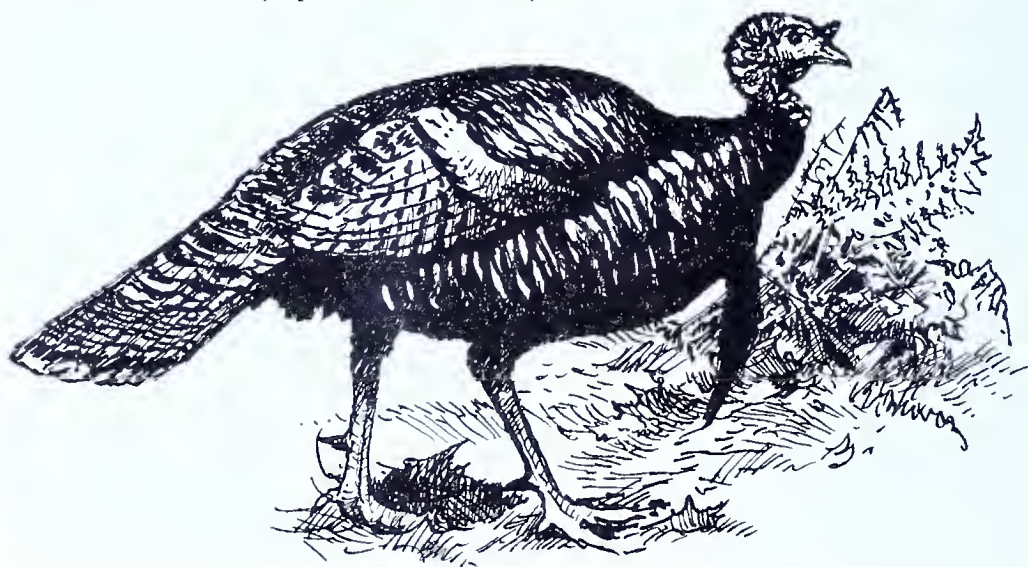
The farmhouse was colder inside than out, and in short order he had a fire roaring in the woodstove. Ford prodded the flames with a poker, then made some coffee. He was considering buying a camp up north when the farm came up for sale. The house was run down, and he had spent countless hours restoring it. The farm had been owned by a man named Maitlin, although everyone called it Spencer's farm, after Alvin Spencer, a tenant from North Carolina.

Spencer and his wife, Milly, had spent most of their lives on a circuitous migration north, putting down stakes every few years, then moving on. The farm was secluded, grown wild even back then, with a budding turkey population. This suited Spencer just fine, because he was first and foremost a turkey hunter, one of a long line of celebrated turkey hunters from the backwoods of the Carolina Piedmont.

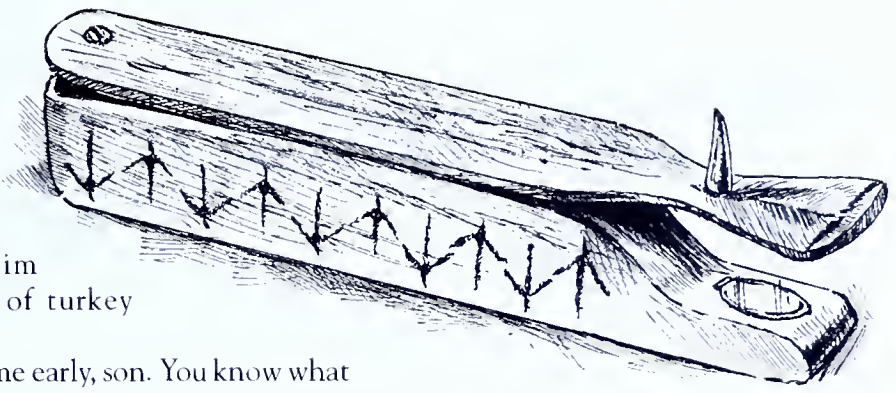
Ford recalled the summer he met Alvin Spencer. Spencer worked with Ford's father at the gravel quarry and asked him to send his boy over to shoot some woodchucks wreaking havoc with Milly's garden. While coming down through the orchard Ford heard the strident yelps of a hen turkey,

The Callmaker

Penn's Woods Sketchbook / Bob Sopchick



then saw a smiling Alvin Spencer sitting on the porch, fanning a box call, greeting him with all manner of turkey talk.



"I like it you come early, son. You know what I was sayin while you was comin down the hill? I'll tell you. I said 'Hey, neighbor, come on down here now, I been waitin on you. There's much to do today'."

"You really said that?" said Ford.

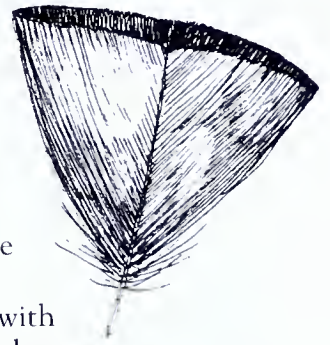
"Jest a bit of friendly flock talk. Listen now." The elfin man stroked and plucked the call. It sounded exactly like a flock of turkeys, one voice running into another, contented purrs and perts, whines and soft clucks, and liquid yelps, over and again, ending with some sharp alarm putts. Then Spencer took off his cap and beat it against his legs like a turkey taking flight.

"I walked along with 'em up here," he said, pointing to his head, "I seen 'em scratchin and pickin up akerns and such. Then one seen what a man caint, and they all get nervous. Oh, they are nervous creatures! They spy somethin in the shadders — maybe Ford settin there with his gun — and *whump, whump, whump*, off they go! If a caller's gonna talk proper turkey, he got to believe in what he's sayin. No gobbledygook. Hey, that's a joke — gobbledygook."

As they walked to the garden Ford found it curious that Spencer looked much like a turkey. He was bald and long-necked, with ruddy cheeks and a pointy nose. He walked like a turkey, too, round-shouldered, with a hurry-up-and-wait cadence.

At noon Ford returned to the farmhouse with a brace of chucks and handed them to Spencer's wife. "Oh my, they are hogs! And cabbage fat! I fixed y'all some lemonade and sandwiches. Alvin's out in the shed."

The aroma of freshly sawn cedar wafted from the open shed door. Spencer sat at a workbench, sanding a turkey call. The shed was like a small museum that housed a collection of artifacts recovered from the digs of some ancient hunting culture. Turkey calls of every shape and design hung in chaos from pegboards. There were calls made from the shells of turtles and coconuts and cowhorns, and dozens of box calls fashioned from woods, both domestic and exotic. On a shelf were rows of slate calls and coffee cans full of strikers. Scrimshawed wingbone yelpers dangled from beaded and feathered lanyards. Several turkey spur necklaces hung among the calls. Chorus lines of turkey legs strung onto wire crisscrossed the ceiling, and one entire wall was plastered with spread turkey fans and cupped wings.



"Think you could teach me to call like you?" asked Ford. "I have a box call at home, but it doesn't sound like yours."

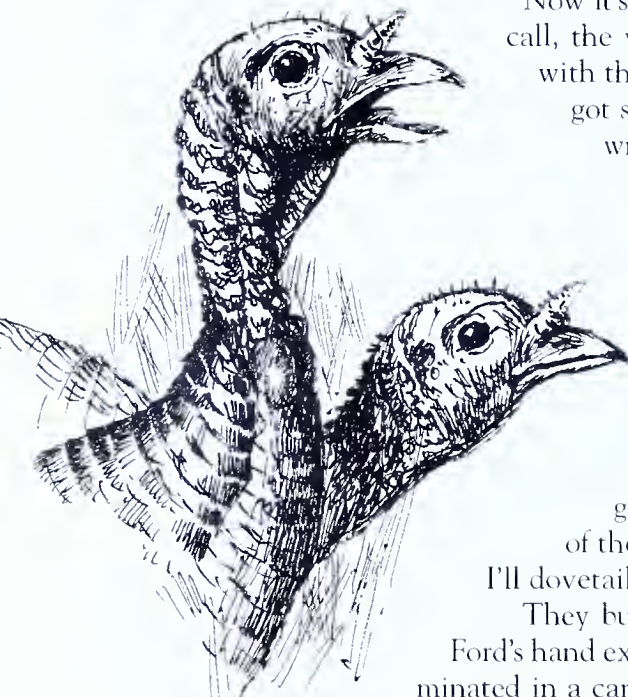
"Let me see your hands," said Alvin. He studied Ford's palms with the discerning eye of a fortune teller. "A caller, a real caller, got to have a call made for his hand and tuned for the turkey's ear. Store bought works, but a caller's got to find his own voice. Only way is to make yer own. Here now, try this'n. You got big paws and this'n might fit."

Ford stroked the call as best he could.

"Well, it'll do. Y'all sound like a schoolboy recitin from a paper, though. But we got all summer to work on that now, don't we?"

BY SUMMER'S END, under the tutelage of the maestro, Ford had made steady progress with a variety of calls. "When you practice, don't look at the call. Look yonder, where the bird is. A fiddler don't look at his fiddle. He's studyin the faces in the crowd, getting 'em fired up. Y'all got to do the same.

"They's a whole flock of turkeys lives in a box call, and each lives at its own sweet spot here on the ridges on each side. They's lost youngins peepin for their dam, and big ol' gobblers, and dumb jakes, and mama hens, and jennies whisperin love talk to gobblers who would get themselves kilt to hear such sweetness. The trough is like this deep holler where the farm sets. When the paddle is stroked, the sound echoes down in the holler and rolls out across the woods.



"Now it's time I show you how to build your own box call, the way it was taught me. First, you got to start with the right wood. They's all kinds of woods, but I got somethin special here." Spencer carefully unwrapped a blank of wood from a quilt. "American chestnut, 150 years old, from my granddaddy's west Carolina furniture shop. Ain't no more chestnut like this.

"The longbox pattern I use was first cut by my great-granddaddy, Earl Thomas Spencer. Down Carolina way it's still called a Spencer pattern. The key to a good call is the paddle. I like a heavy paddle cause you must have control. You got to have weight to draw those notes up out of the box. Light paddles can't do that. Sometimes I'll dovetail a piece of slate in the belly of the paddle."

They built a call just over a foot in length that fit Ford's hand exactly. Alvin created a unique paddle that terminated in a carved breast feather, and affixed a long turkey spur on top for added control. Behind the trough he hollowed out a small trunk with a brass lid to hold a disk of chalk. Milly stitched a beautiful call holster from doeskin, with fringes and delicate beadwork.

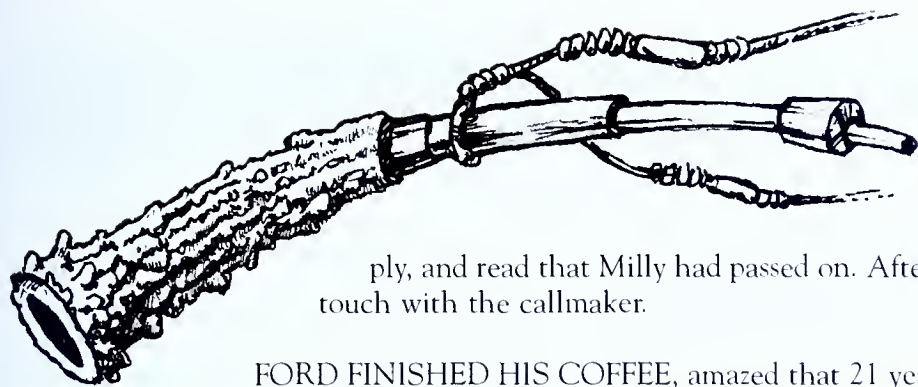
Ford ran a series of yelps that rang with the clarity of vesper bells, floating up the hollow, fading in the pines.

"Special, ain't it?" said the call maker, smiling.

That autumn Ford called in a jake to Spencer's gun. The next day Spencer returned the favor, reeling in a long-spurred gobbler, with a combination of deep clucks and raspy yelps so convincing they seemed to Ford to be the secret doctrine of the longbeard society itself.

The litmus test for the new call would be a spring gobbler, and come February, Ford was bursting like a catkin bud. His enthusiasm waned, though, when he learned that Alvin and Milly had decided to move back to Carolina. Milly's health was poor, and living in the damp hollow where cold air settled only aggravated her arthritis.

Ford took a gobbler that spring with his new call and enclosed a single breast feather



in his letter to Spencer. Months passed before he received a re-

ply, and read that Milly had passed on. After that, he lost touch with the callmaker.

FORD FINISHED HIS COFFEE, amazed that 21 years had passed so quickly. He had become a dedicated turkey hunter and student of the wild turkey, making and collecting turkey calls as a hobby. Last year, though, his beloved Spencer box call was shattered in a fall while he was traversing a boulder field. He painstakingly glued it back together, but the resonance was gone, relegating it to the mantle. He copied the pattern, but could not recreate the magical tones.

Ford went upstairs to finish a few remaining jobs. While sweeping out a small bedroom closet a pleasant smell jarred his senses: It was the singular aroma of cedar, and reminded him of Spencer's turkey shanty. The closet was cedar-lined, and one board, one he hadn't noticed before, caught his attention. It was much lighter than the red cedar and was tacked in place with different nails. Ford removed it with a pry bar and saw that it was American chestnut, of the same hue that Spencer had unwrapped from the blanket.

A few days later, he had fashioned an exact reproduction of the Spencer call from the chestnut plank, and to his delight it rang with the same flawless tones. On the first day of spring gobbler season an old gobbler that had foiled Ford the previous year almost tripped over its long beard as it came running in to the lovely yelps.

AT THE PROMPTING of his friends and wife, Ford entered a turkey calling contest at the local sportsmen's show. It was bigger than he imagined, with a large audience and a long line of seasoned competitors.

He drew the call from his holster and strode across the stage to the camo curtain separating contestants from the judges. Ford, much to his surprise, scored well in the preliminary round.

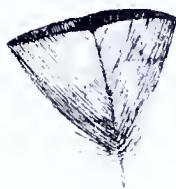
The final round concluded with a caller's choice. When his turn arrived, Ford looked beyond the crowd and lights and banners, stepping outside the moment, and in that place watched a mixed flock of turkeys work the oak flat above the farm. He walked and talked with them. Each time he stroked the paddle, genuine turkey talk flowed from the call and streamed across the stage, filling the auditorium with its rich wildness. His declarations were pure avian, beyond the rote of practiced inflections bent to please a judge's ear.

Ford climbed the stage one last time then, hefting the box calling trophy. He shook hands with the line of judges, and when the oldest judge grasped his hand Ford became weak in the knees; it was Alvin Spencer.

"If I warn't an old hermit gobbler myself, I'd a flew right over that curtain to join your flock," said Spencer. "I never heerd talk the likes of that, son."

"I have," said Ford.

It was then the callmaker recognized Ford, and shook his hand the harder.





FIELD NOTES



Maybe Next Month

YORK — I had planned to do a Field Note about neighboring officer Rodney Mee's disappearing confiscated deer, but I feel compelled to use this Note to thank the Delta-Carduff Volunteer Fire Company and the Maryland State Police for their help in rescuing a hunter who had broken his leg in a treacherous section of Lower Chanceford Township. A helicopter was needed to evacuate the victim to a hospital in Lancaster County. Just a reminder to the hunter: Don't forget to send in your antlerless deer harvest report card.

— WCO GUY HANSEN, RED LION



One's Loss is Another's Gain

MERCER — LMO Jim Deniker was having trouble with his watchband coming apart while we were stocking pheasants, and after releasing a crate of roosters at one stop Jim's watch was missing. He couldn't find it in the crate or on the trailer, so he said, "That daggone ringneck stole my watch. I bet it must have hooked a toe in the buckle and flew off with it." I couldn't help but laugh as I told Jim, "You lost a watch, but I've found a Field Note."

— WCO DONALD G. CHAYBIN, GREENVILLE

Knows the Good Guys

MONROE — After receiving reports of deer being shot at night in an open field, the next evening I set up my vehicle in a hedgerow adjacent to the field. I wasn't parked more than 30 seconds when my vehicle was surrounded by deer, with one lying down within feet of the truck.

— WCO VICTOR ROSA, FLEETVILLE

Down Memory Lane

I awoke one morning to the cawing of seemingly hundreds of crows fussing around my house, and figured an owl must be perched on my roof. The crows brought back memories of yesteryear, when it was part of a WCO's job to hunt them for predator control. After I went outside I realized that the crows had spotted a plastic peregrine falcon I had placed on my front porch to deter songbirds from roosting there. Now, where did I put those crow calls?

— RON SUTHERLAND, WCO RETIRED, MOUNT GRENA

What It's All About

A hunter who hadn't been hunting small game in years told me he has re-discovered the joy of small game hunting. He spent a day on one of our game lands where pheasants were stocked and fired 25 shells and bagged one bird. He said it reminded him of the good old days.

— LMO KEITH SANFORD, MIFFLINVILLE

Late Bloomer

Dave Albrecht of Waterford was combining his soybeans on November 1 when he noticed a hen turkey reluctant to leave the field. He checked the area and found the hen had been sitting on a nest of nine eggs.

— LMO WAYNE LUGAILA, WATERFORD

A Real Shame

Due to the irresponsible use of ATVs on her Monroe County property, a cooperator withdrew her 801 acres from the Farm-Game Program. Keep this in mind the next time you see someone illegally operating an ATV or other off-road vehicle on private lands open to public access. Become involved and report the activity, and be willing to testify, or you just may lose a cherished hunting location.

— LMO EDWARD ZINDELL, GOULDSBORO

It's All in a Name

TRAINING SCHOOL — While on field training assignments throughout the state, here are just some of the towns and street names I encountered: Huckleberry Land, Crossroads, The Cove, Michaux, Site R, The Underground Pentagon, Million Dollar Highway, Luv Lane, Rachellwood, Homer City, Lucas Acres, and even a borough with the same name as my classmate, Glen Campbell.

— TRAINEE RICKY A. DEITERICH, HARRISBURG

Check it Out

BERKS — The Blue Mountain Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation recently held their annual Women in the Outdoors event. The participants had the opportunity to try fly-fishing, shotgun and .22 rifle shooting, game preparation and outdoor cooking. Be sure to look for one of these events in your area this year or visit the Game Commission's website for information on the Becoming an Outdoors-Woman Program.

— WCO DAVID BROCKMEIER, MOHNTON

Dedicated Group

TRAINING SCHOOL — After only a few weeks of field training, my respect and admiration for WCOs has only increased. My hat is off to you, WCOs Hower, Hansen and Hartless. I wish the public could see those 16-hour days, missed meals, and time missed with families.

— TRAINEE JOHN W. VEYLUPEK, HARRISBURG

Unfortunate

JUNIATA — I spent most of the turkey season opener at the Lewistown Hospital Emergency Room, interviewing three hunting incident victims who were shot in mistake for game. Please take a few extra moments to positively identify your target while hunting. When 6-foot turkeys begin showing up in Pennsylvania, it will bring a whole new meaning to Thanksgiving dinner.

— WCO DANIEL I. CLARK, HONEY GROVE



Had its Name on It

WESTMORELAND — Property owner Dave Whipkey and his son, Mike, were checking their treestands for the upcoming deer season, when a bear appeared and climbed the tree containing one of their stands. The bear then stood on the platform and began to rub its back on the tree.

— DEPUTY EDWARD J. FARZATI, UNITED

Fell in Our Laps

FRANKLIN — Trainee Beth Fife, three deputies and I were standing along a rural road late one night when Deputy Bob Plumb said a spotlihter was coming. The vehicle came over the hill and stopped right in front of us. We cited two individuals for having a loaded firearm in a vehicle and spotlighting after hours. These were the first after-hours spotlighters we had gotten while Beth was here, and I had to convince her that it wasn't always this easy.

— WCO BARRY A. LEONARD, CHAMBERS



Turned the Tables

SUSQUEHANNA — Forest Mayo shot at a deer and was down on his hands and knees looking for blood when he heard a twig snap. He looked up and saw a big doe bearing down on him at full speed. Instinctively, he raised his rifle, but the deer slammed into him, pushing the scope into his forehead and knocking him over. Dazed and bleeding, he watched the doe scamper away. Forest is okay and now can laugh about the incident.

— WCO CHARLES J. ARCOVITCH, UNIONDALE

Mission Accomplished

TRAINING SCHOOL — During deer season I noticed quite a few junior license holders with their first deer, many of which were antlerless. I think the concurrent season was a positive step in getting young hunters involved in the hunting heritage.

— TRAINEE JUSTIN T. KLUGH, HARRISBURG

Checking it Twice

I was checking a hunter when he said he had never been checked by a game warden. I told him that it was my intention to check every hunter who steps foot in Forest County, and that I could now check him off my list. He gave me a strange look and asked in a serious tone, "Do you really have a list?"

— LMO GEORGE J. MILLER, MARIENVILLE

Really Opened the Sinuses

A young archer here thought that a discarded nasal spray bottle would make a good dispenser for his favorite buck lure hunting scent, until his mother, while cleaning his room, noticed the spray and decided she could use a shot. I don't know if it cleared her sinuses, but it took a call to the Poison Control Center to make sure there would be no lasting effect. The lad learned a valuable lesson: Keep products in their original container, or at the very least, mark the container as to what's in it.

— LES TIM MARKS, SOUTH CENTRAL REGION OFFICE

Thanks, Bro

ELK — I've worked with some great officers in my eight years as a WCO, but it wasn't until this past year that I finally got to work with the officer who inspired me the most. I can remember, at the age of four, walking the grounds of the Ross Leffler School of Conservation at Brockway during an open house for the 13th Class. A few years later I stayed with this officer for a while, and he taught me about wildlife and conservation. At that point I knew I wanted to be a WCO. In 1994 I achieved my goal, and have since spent many hours on the phone and visiting him for advice. Recently retired, he proudly wore his uniform and worked with me on his last day in the field. It hit me then that in just a few weeks, for the first time since 1968, my brother, Denver McDowell Jr., won't be on the job, protecting wildlife in the commonwealth.

— WCO DOTY MCDOWELL, ST. MARYS

Taking No Chances

SOMERSET — On the bear season opener Deputy Ravenscraft and I were patrolling the Mt. Davis area when we noticed a small black pony in a pasture, wearing a fluorescent orange vest around its neck and one on each side. When we got out of the vehicle the pony ran over to us, seemingly wanting us to check out its orange.

— WCO BRIAN E. WITHERITE, MEYERSDALE

Can't Win

BRADFORD — Many hunters commented about the unusually warm weather during hunting season. Boyd Rowe from Ulster told me that it was too hot to dress in heavy clothes and the briars were too thick to wear light clothing.

— WCO WILLIAM A. BOWER, TROY



Nick Rosato

It Figures

On the third day of bear season a father and his son came in to the Franklin Check Station to tell me about their hunting experience. They had hunted hard on Monday and Tuesday at SGL 45 and never saw hide nor hair of a bear. On Wednesday they decided it was time to get the bird dog and hunt grouse on SGL 39. They hadn't been in the woods long when their dog locked up on point. The son moved in to flush the bird and, you guessed it, two bears busted out of the cover.

— LMO JAMES E. DENIKER, SANDY LAKE

Hook, Line and Sinker

FULTON — Ray Erzler was fishing at the Meadowgrounds Lake on SGL 53 when he noticed a green heron try to fly off with a small catfish, but each time the bird became airborne the fish would get yanked from its bill. After several unsuccessful attempts the heron gave up. It seems the catfish was hooked to a piece of fishing line that was snagged on a stump.

— WCO STEPHEN A. LEIENDECKER, NEEDMORE

Local Jargon

WCO Al Zellner instructed Trainee Dan Schmidt to get on the radio to find out the whereabouts of Deputy Rick Weimer, who was to meet us for ATV patrol on a game lands. Dan returned to the gathered officers, waiting to move out, when he announced that Weimer was in a town he had never heard of called Doneloadin. He soon learned, however, that "doneloadin" means the machines are off the trailer and are ready to go. The fine young officer took his ribbing well. Good luck in your new career, Dan.

— COMMISSIONER SAMUEL J. DUNKLE, DUNCANSVILLE

Improvised

TRAINING SCHOOL — While WCO Bill Bower and I were doing a radio call-in program about the outdoors, you should have seen the look on Bill's face when the DJ handed Bill the weather report to read.

— TRAINEE CHAD R. EYLER, HARRISBURG



Crossing Guard

WYOMING — Bob Dunlap was driving along a narrow country lane when a bear stepped out of the woods, stood in the middle of the road, and then raised both front paws as if signaling him to stop. Bob couldn't believe it when two cubs crossed the road, and then Momma dropped to all fours and quickly disappeared.

— WCO WILLIAM WASSERMAN, TUNKHANNOCK

Had it Backwards

MONROE — After checking a couple youngsters and their father, and finding multiple violations, I asked the father if he had paid attention at the Hunter-Trapper Education class his children had recently attended. He said he was relying on his 12- and 14-year-olds to make sure they were doing the right thing. I was quick to point out that the reason we require youngsters to hunt with an adult is so that the adult can help them do things legally and safely, not the other way around.

— WCO PETER F. SUSSENBACH, BLAKESLEE

Waited a Long Time

While at the SGL 289 maintenance building, a certain big shot Bradford County WCO sent his trainee across the parking lot to ask me for a key to the gas pump (because he had forgotten his) to fill up his truck. After four years here, I finally “got ya, Bill,” in a Field Note.

— LMO RICHARD LUPINSKY, EAST SMITHFIELD

Hardy Birds

Game Lands Maintenance Supervisor Allen Anke had a stack of pallets on a truck to be used to build artificial brush piles, when a hunter, who thought they were pheasant crates, offered to help stock. As he stood next to Allen, a pheasant flew out of his game bag and landed in a nearby hedgerow. The man and his dog were last seen in pursuit of the bird over the ridge.

— LMO JOHN SHUTKUFSKI, DAMASCUS

Different Perspective

SULLIVAN — I was chatting with Bill Bower when his wife, Mary Alice, commented that some local newspapers use Field Notes as filler material. I immediately said that they were invaluable journalistic creations, which sometimes serve as literary links between other, equally important articles. Bill wholeheartedly agreed; Mary Alice just rolled her eyes.

— WCO WILLIAM WILLIAMS, LA PORTE



Who's Next?

ERIE — On a day off I introduced WCO Larry Smith's trainee to duck hunting. John Veylupek had never been duck hunting, nor had he spent much time in beaver ponds, so I wanted this trip to be educational as well as fun. John did learn the valuable lesson that water is deepest right in front of the dam, and also that the water is pretty cold in November. I hope Larry will still let me associate with his trainees after I returned this one all wet.

— WCO DARIN L. CLARK, ELGIN

Pheasant Hunting Tips

1) When you down a pheasant, make sure it is dead before placing it in your game bag. 2) When your hunting partner tells you that it is not dead, believe him. 3) When the bird escapes from your game bag an hour later, make sure your pants are securely fastened before giving chase, right, Ron?

— LMO SCOTT BILLS, HALIFAX

Playing Possum?

BEDFORD — My cousin Denny Yahner went hunting with a friend and the friend's son at Prince Gallitzin State Park, when the boy downed a buck. When he went to tag the deer, however, he discovered another hunter's tag attached to the ear. I'd love to hear the other hunter's story.

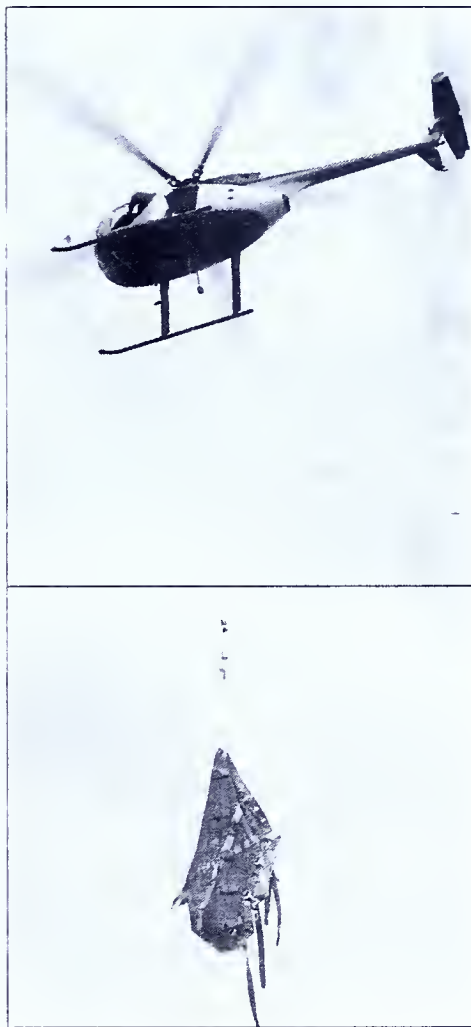
— WCO DAN YAHNER, EVERETT

New buck study launched

THE GAME COMMISSION and Penn State University have launched one of the most extensive radio-telemetry studies of male deer dispersal and survival ever attempted. To highlight the significance of this project, a demonstration of one of the capturing and radio-collaring techniques was held this past December. Project plans call for the capture of 600 bucks in two study areas over the next three years. Deer will be captured using a variety of methods, including drop nets, walk-in traps, dart guns and helicopters. The helicopter capture method, which was demonstrated at a December press briefing, is being conducted by Hawkins & Powers Aviation Inc., based in Greybull, Wyoming. The company has been involved with other helicopter wildlife capture programs for moose, elk and wolves.

This study is designed to yield a wealth of information about bucks, particularly: Will antler restrictions result in greater numbers of older bucks? And, do hunters perceive there are better hunting opportunities?

"We look forward to learning more about buck activity and movement patterns, antler size changes and antler rubbing and scraping behavior," said Dr. Duane Diefenbach, Assistant Unit Leader for the Pennsylvania Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit at Penn State. "And, all of this research data collection can be done without having a negative ef-



Bob D'Angelo

fect on hunters. In fact, radio-tagged deer are legal to harvest, and we encourage hunters to take the opportunity to do so. All we ask is that they call the toll-free number on the transmitter or ear tag so that we can gain further valuable information about that deer."

Over the next three years, plans

call for the monitoring of 100 bucks per year on each of the two study areas, one in Armstrong County and the other in Centre County. The bucks will be captured and fitted with radio-transmitters by Game Commission biologists and Penn State graduate students.

Specific project objectives are:

- Determine the survival of bucks from six to 30 months of age. How many bucks hunters harvest, what are other causes of mortality, and are there regulation changes that might increase buck survival? Combined with the two-year fawn mortality study, this objective should shed additional light on mortality causes for deer.

- Monitor changes in male age structure because of antler restrictions. How does age affect antler size and how does breeding behavior change? Data already collected from studies in other states show that bucks grow their largest antlers between the ages of four and eight years. Other studies suggest that age and quality of habitat (nutrition) play significant roles in antler development, as well as genetics.

- Evaluate hunter satisfaction with antler restrictions.

Funding for the project is being provided by the Game Commission, state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and grants from three foundations being coordinated by Audubon Pennsylvania and Pennsylvania Habitat Alliance.

This study also fulfills a promise Dr. Gary Alt made during his public presentations last year. When he first proposed, then withdrew, an antler restriction proposal for the 2001-02 deer seasons, Dr. Alt noted he was concerned that the current depleted condition of habitat in many areas may not be able to sustain the addi-

tional strain of tens of thousands of "protected" small bucks that would be added to the population. He wanted to reduce the antlerless population in 2001 to make room for an increase in the buck population in the future.

"If the deer harvest, especially the antlerless harvest, is not adequate in 2001, statewide antler restrictions for 2002 would have to be delayed until we get an adequate harvest," Dr. Alt said. "However, this research project will proceed, possibly with antler restrictions in the Armstrong and Centre county study areas."

Second, Dr. Alt wanted the Game Commission to be in a position to evaluate the effectiveness of an antler restriction, whether it is implemented on a statewide or study area basis. For example: At what rate will an antler restriction move bucks into the older age class, and how large will those bucks be the following year? Another reason Dr. Alt suggested moving slowly on this front is because he doesn't know how many hunters support antler restrictions.

Another joint Game Commission/Penn State study was the Hunter Movement Study, conducted during the rifle deer season, in the Sprout State Forest in the Northcentral Region. This study included hundreds of hunters carrying Global Positioning Units to monitor their movements during the hunt. Many more hunters were asked to mark their day's hunt on a topographic map. DCNR's Bureau of Forestry conducted aerial surveys to determine the distribution of hunters and amount of hunter pressure in the area.

This information will enable managers to better understand hunter movement and pressure across the study area, their success, and their attitudes toward hunting issues in "big woods" habitats.

2001 bear harvest: 3,063

HUNTERS TOOK 3,063 bears last year, nearly matching the state record of 3,075 set in 2000 and marking the second time in Pennsylvania history that the bear harvest topped 3,000. The harvest reflects continued growth in the bear population. "Since the 1980s, an abundance of high quality bear habitat and excellent reproductive rates have caused bear numbers to increase," said PGC biologist Mark Ternent. "This year's {2001's} mild weather may not have been the best for hunting, but it kept bears from denning early. An abundance of acorns and other mast also kept many bears moving about."

The first day's kill was the largest ever recorded. More than 2,000 were taken by hunters who overcame fog and warm temperatures to find bears.

Ternent also noted that this year's dry conditions may have enabled hunters to get into areas normally wet and swampy, where bears typically find refuge during the hunting season. Similar to recent years, bears were harvested in 50 of Pennsylvania's 67 counties, but the kill distribution had two noticeable changes.

"Counties normally considered on the periphery of the primary bear range saw marked increases in their harvests, which is a result of the continued expansion of bears," Ternent said. As examples, he pointed to Forest and Warren in the northwest; Somerset and Westmoreland in the southwest; and Dauphin and Lebanon in the southeast.

"In northern tier counties, however, the harvest declined slightly as a poor beechnut crop caused many bears to den early or move south to adjacent oak-dominated counties,

where harvests held steady or increased," Ternent said.

Of the 3,075 bears harvested, 3,024 were taken with a rifle; 20 with a handgun; 9 with a shotgun; 8 with a muzzleloader; one with a compound bow; and one with a crossbow (by a hunter with a disabled sportsmen permit).

The largest bear shot was a 666-pound (live weight) male, taken on the opening day at 3 p.m. by Scott L. Cummings of Troy in Lycoming County. Other big bears taken include:

— 653-pound bear taken by John M. Whyne Jr. of Catawissa, in Columbia County; 638-pound bear by James K. Wright, Knox Dale, Forest County; 635-pound bear by David E. Hottenstein, New Albany, Sullivan County; 634-pound bear by Raymond K. Pruss of Julian, Huntingdon County; 623-pound bear by David Maloney of Sassamanville, in Pike County; 617-pound bear by Hartman R. Kevin of McClure, in Snyder County; 614-pound bear by Jerry L. Laughman of Hanover, Lackawanna County; 611-pound bear by Gary A. Laird of Reading, in Pike County; 590-pound bear by Scot H. Mosier of Palmerton, in Monroe County; and 590-pound bear by Joshua F. Young of Pittsburgh, in Warren County.

Northwest - Warren, 92 (64); Forest, 81 (58); Jefferson, 58 (43); Venango, 42 (43); Clarion, 25 (15); Butler, 6 (2); Crawford 0 (5); and Mercer 0 (1).

Southwest - Somerset, 76 (56); Westmoreland, 61 (25); Fayette, 43 (26); Indiana, 36 (45); Armstrong, 34 (38); and Cambria, 25 (43).

Northcentral - Clinton, 267 (248);

Lycoming, 242 (223); Centre, 151 (151); Tioga, 133 (152); Clearfield, 130 (175); Cameron, 126 (94); Potter, 117 (203); Elk, 109 (108); McKean, 107 (154); and Union, 36 (20).

Southcentral - Huntingdon, 99 (64); Blair, 52 (53); Bedford, 52 (43); Mifflin, 37 (24); Snyder, 9 (12); Fulton, 7 (10); Juniata, 7 (5); Perry, 5 (2); and Franklin 1 (0).

Northeast - Pike, 177 (170);

Luzerne, 95 (72); Monroe, 65 (103); Carbon, 61 (72); Wayne, 56 (112); Sullivan, 55 (94); Bradford, 47 (48); Lackawanna, 47 (35); Columbia, 36 (33); Wyoming, 35 (50); Susquehanna, 21 (19); Northumberland, 6 (8); and Montour 2 (0).

Southeast - Schuylkill, 47 (35); Dauphin, 18 (7); Lebanon, 14 (6); Berks, 6 (2); Northampton, 6 (2); and Lehigh, 3 (2).

PGC Retirees: Correction



William L. Elliott
Dispatcher
Northwest Region
Townville
6/1/88-8/3/01

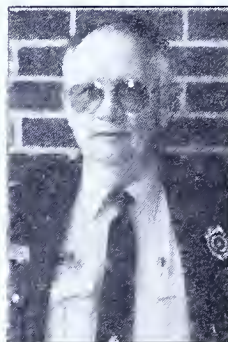
The photographs of PGC retirees on page 45 of the January issue were not in proper arrangement. To all concerned, especially the employees and their families, coworkers and friends, we apologize. Here are those photographs with the corresponding names as they should have appeared.



Glenn H. Arnold
Surveyor 1
Bureau of Land
Management
Newport
8/9/65-2/16/01



Leo C. Yahner
WCO, Venango County
Northwest Region
Franklin
3/25/68-3/30/01



Elwood (Butch) L. Camp, Jr.
WCO, Potter County
Northcentral Region
Ulysses
7/12/75-7/20/01



George F. Mock
WCO, Centre County
Northcentral Region
Spring Mills
3/28/70-3/30/01

Pennsylvanians score high at national YHEC competition

PENNSYLVANIANS continue a tradition of excellence on a national level with their knowledge of outdoor skills and conservation. Young competitors again scored high in the National Rifle Association's International Youth Hunter Education Challenge, held in Raton, New Mexico. Keystone State squads finished second in Junior and Senior team competition, and garnered Top Gun honors in both Junior and Senior level competition.

Furthermore, while Keystone State YHEC competitors were winning top honors in New Mexico, five students from North East High School in Erie were taking first place honors in the 2001 National Envirothon in Raymond, Mississippi.

The Pennsylvania Game Commission is an active participant and a sponsoring agency of both YHEC and the Envirothon on a state level.

Youngsters carrying the Keystone State banner have now logged International YHEC titles seven straight years.

International Top Guns this year were Devon Babcock of Sayre, Bradford County, in overall Junior Division (ages 14 and under) competition and Jeremy Castle of Columbia Cross Roads in the senior division (ages 15-19). Babcock was runnerup Junior Top Gun in 2000.

The Pennsylvania Senior Sharpshooters, coached by Craig Troutman, rolled up a score of 8,179 in taking second place in Senior Team competition. The squad included Josh and Samuel Easter of Herndon; Josh Petris, Mosherville; Jeremy Castle, Columbia Cross Roads; and Garrett

Desmond, Mill Hall. They took first place in muzzleloader shooting and third in rifle.

The Pennsylvania Junior Blue quintet from the Sayre Sportsmen's Club, coached by Dave Hafer, had a score of 6,916 and took second place Senior Team honors. The squad included Jarrod Chandler, Babcock, Lynsey Arnold, Isaac Stoll and Benjamin Green. They were first in rifle and third in both archery and orienteering.

The 2001 International YHEC event attracted an entry list of more than 400 youngsters. The Pennsylvania YHEC Council officially entered 25 youngsters in the New Mexico competition based on results from Pennsylvania's state competition held in June at the Game Commission's Scotia Range near State College.

Additionally, the Branch Valley Sportsmen's Club from Perkasi in southeastern Pennsylvania sent coaches and 15 youngsters to Raton, raising \$10,000 to support the effort.

Kyle Dolan, of Mill Hall, posted the only perfect score during the International. Dolan scored 300 in the Junior muzzleloader competition, shooting at woodchuck targets placed at three distances out to 75 yards.

The event included competition in eight events: .22 rifle, shotgun, muzzleloader, archery, orienteering, hunter safety trail, wildlife identification and a written exam.

In 2002, the International YHEC championships will return to Pennsylvania and the Tioga Hammond Recreation Area near Mansfield, Tioga County.

Pennsylvania's team in the Na-

tional Envirothon scored 554.5 points out of a possible 700, topping teams from 41 other states and seven Canadian provinces. Since the national event was first held in 1988, Pennsylvania youngsters have captured eight

first place trophies.

The North East High School squad included Carson Engelskirger, Justin Pierson, Jeremy Stempka, Doug Fynan and Markus Fish. John Hallenburg and Patrick Coyne served as coaches.

Hunters Sharing the Harvest celebrates 10th anniversary

PENNSYLVANIA hunters are expected to donate upwards of 100,000 pounds of venison and other wild game to local food banks and soup kitchens this year through the Hunters Sharing the Harvest (HSH) program, which is celebrating its 10th anniversary.

The non-profit Hunters Sharing the Harvest program is sponsored by Pennsylvanians for Responsible Use of Animals and operates with the cooperation of the Game Commission and state Department of Agriculture. Other sponsors include the American Crossbow Federation; Pennsylvania Deer Association; Pennsylvania Farm Bureau; Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs; Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation; several local chapters of Safari Club International; and the United Bowhunters of Pennsylvania. The program also is supported by the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank, statewide meat processor trade groups and religious organizations.

"In 2000, about 100,000 pounds of venison were donated to Hunters Sharing the Harvest by Pennsylvania hunters," said Ken Brandt, program coordinator. "That meat was distributed to 200,000 needy Pennsylvanians through food banks, shelters and homeless missions. It's a tremendously meaningful service, one many hunters are proud to participate in."

Since 2000, Hunters Sharing the Harvest have been encouraging hunters and nonhunters to donate a dollar or more through the "Give a Buck" program to cover the costs of processing deer meat donated. For every \$50 raised, one deer can be processed and provide 100 meals.

"We realized that more hunters might be willing to donate a whole deer if the costs of processing the deer were covered," Brandt said. "The 'Give a Buck' program combines the venison donations of hunters with the financial donations of nonhunters and other hunters for the benefit of the needy."

In October of 2000, the Game Commission unanimously approved a three-year grant totaling \$15,000 for the Hunters Sharing the Harvest program to help finance the processing of deer meat donated by hunters.

For information about Hunters Sharing the Harvest, call 717-367-5223; or e-mail keystnken@aol.com. Tax-deductible contributions made payable to "Hunters Sharing the Harvest" may be mailed to: Ken Brandt, HSTH Program Coordinator, 3317 Turnpike Road, Elizabethtown, PA 17022.

For additional information visit the Game Commission's website, www.pgc.state.pa.us and click on the "Hunting Information" section.



Off the Wire

by Bob D'Angelo

BEARS

Most eastern states are experiencing growing bear populations, with a collective estimate of 140,000 bruins in 2000. The 13 eastern states that allow bear hunting had a collective harvest of 19,400 animals in 2000. Many states, particularly in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions, set new harvest records in 2000, including Maine, 3,483; Pennsylvania, 3,075; Michigan, 1,890; West Virginia, 1,328; New York, 1,070; and Virginia, 1,000. States that currently do not have a bear season include Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, New Jersey and Ohio.

POPULAR RUFFED GROUSE HUNTING STATES

Minnesota's 140,000 grouse hunters annually take approximately 650,000 birds, but Pennsylvania and Michigan, with about 175,000 hunters, are the most popular grouse hunting states. Other top grouse states in terms of hunter numbers include: Wisconsin, 150,000; Maine, 100,000; Ohio, West Virginia and Virginia, 75,000; and New York, 68,000.

CHESAPEAKE BAY EAGLES

Bald eagle populations have reached a 23-year high in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. There were 533 active nests with 813 fledgling eaglets last spring, a nearly 10 percent increase from 2000. For the first time since the 1940s, a nest with a fledgling has been recorded in the District of Columbia.

WEST AND SOUTHWEST POPULATION TRENDS

Between 1990 and 2000, the population of Colorado and Utah each increased by 30 percent; the population of Idaho went up 29 percent; Arizona's population increased by 40 percent; Nevada, 66 percent; California, 4.1 million; and Texas, 3.9 million. Where do hunters from these states go to enjoy their pastime? From 1996 through 1999, the number of small game/bird licenses sold in Wyoming to nonresidents increased 63 percent.

ARKANSAS

Large numbers of northern red oaks, black oaks and southern red oaks are dead or dying in the Ozark and Ouachita national forests in Arkansas as a result of a small beetle called a red oak borer. Approximately 300,000 acres in the Ozark National Forest have already been affected. The loss of such a large percentage of oak trees could have a negative impact on game populations in the area for years to come.

MARYLAND

Representatives from environmental groups and home builder associations signed an agreement to create "Builders for the Bay" — a first-of-its-kind program to reduce environmental impacts from residential and commercial construction within the Chesapeake Bay watershed. The program encourages the voluntary adoption of 22 site design principles that reduce the environmental effects of development.

Go Short, Go Shallow; Go Long, Go Deep

A BUNCH of us were sitting in my kitchen, in the warm glow of soup and sandwiches after a cold morning of deer hunting, when a doe ran through the backyard. We all flushed like quail from the table to assorted windows and watched it disappear into the woods behind the house.

"If Don had been sitting in his stand," someone observed, "he'd have had a shot at that one."

Of the group that gathered at my house for opening day last year, my friend Don had the shortest, shallowest stand. If our property were flat, his orange-vested back would have been visible from the house, a scant 50 yards away. There, on the back edge of an evergreen patch bordering the yard, we had built a log blind, with a tarp on the roof and a seat for the hunter. The view was of the base of the small hollow that emerges from the clearcut above and opens below the house.

A deer trail, churned to mud, crosses the hollow 60 to 70 yards from the blind. The whitetails using it scamper from the steep woods across the road from the house, pass by our windows, scoot through the hollow, round the edge of fields opposite, and duck into the tangle of the clearcut. The blind was built with the thought of quick, half-hour hunts close to home, or to satisfy the gotta-be-out-there urge when the weather turns bad. Don didn't see a deer opening morning, but if he had been in the blind later in the week, he'd have had a shot or at least a few heart-thumping moments trying to get one.

Watching deer feed in my yard, after



Bob Steiner

acorns or tender shrubs, I've realized they don't know what a house is. As they've bounded down the driveway, barely missing the parked car, it dawns on me they don't know what a car is. Deer don't mind feeding or bedding within sight of habitations or even stores and industry. They certainly don't let passing traffic get on their cud-chewing nerves. It's the crunching step of the deer hunter that sends them off, an evolutionary reaction to the tread of the predator.

"Go short, go shallow" is a recipe for deer hunting success that I have trouble making myself obey. Knowing I'm not far from buildings and human activity (though I'm well out of or have permission to be in the safety zone) bothers me more than it does the deer. Car engines and 18-wheeler gears grind my teeth more than theirs. Deer don't seem to mind loafing in proximity to

civilization; in some places they have little choice. Hunting pressure doesn't necessarily chase whitetails farther back in. Hunters in the heart of the deer's territory also chase them back out.

The shortest, shallowest hunt I ever had occurred this past firearm season. I had never hunted the place before, but applied for an antlerless permit because the county had so many available and was "only" a two-hour drive from home. Several friends also obtained "doe" licenses there, and we spent a rainy morning driving around a large parcel of public ground, getting the lay of the land. Eventually the downpour quit and we parked. We decided two of us would go into the woods one way off the dirt road, and two the other.

Rather than walk through the grapevine-tangled ravines to the steep hillside beyond, I hiked the road a few steps to get on the top of the slope. That way I would skirt the drainages from above. I cut into the pines and angled to the edge, not 50 yards off the road, and stopped to look over the ground below. What a great place for a deer to bed, I thought, scanning the bird's-eye view of vines and briars. Especially around the super-thick thorn patch at the head of the hollow. Too bad that cover is so near the road.

Just then a deer got up from the back edge of the thorn patch and moved away. Another followed. I braced the rifle against a tree trunk, missed an opportunity for a shot at the first deer ambling through the opening and shot at the second. It took a few steps and went down.

I spent more time going around and through the multiflora rose canes to get to the deer than it took for me to leave the car and shoot. When I reached the deer and looked around, I saw the car maybe 80 yards away. I had been all of about three minutes in the woods when I shot the deer.

Why were the deer bedded there? They had found a thick, out-of-the-way cul-de-sac that hunters at this well-used game lands had overlooked. Too near the road

to bother with, I suppose. I got the deer mainly because we didn't know that a larger parking lot was at the top of the hill, with a trail that lead away from the road — and the deer's hideaway. Hunting short and shallow, because of my unfamiliarity with the area, let me fill my tag.

Rarely do I purposely stay short and shallow for deer hunting, because I enjoy the hiking component of the hunt that takes me long and deep. After hunting woods patches near the house for several days the beginning of last deer season, I was glad to finally go with friends to a thousands-of-acres game lands in the southern part of our county. There, hunting long and deep can be done literally. I hiked down the hill and up the creek, to where the stream split. Although recent rain had the water level up, one fork looked at most boot-top deep. I was quick and my boots were waterproof, and I got across with barely a seep-through.

Strangely, after I crossed the creek, just the prints of one other hunter showed on the logging road. The farther I walked, deer sign — tracks and droppings and some beds — became more abundant. I continued on about a mile, still-hunting through the afternoon and sitting and watching now and then. I checked my watch and realized the walk had taken me more than two hours. With just an hour until quitting time, I knew I had better start back.

I was walking a little too fast on the return trip and didn't get a shot at what I'm sure was a buck. I jumped the deer in the oak woods and it bounded away. I got a glimpse of something high and pale and more than just ears above the head before the deer made the clearcut. Without other hunters to disturb it, the deer was feeding just before dark, as always. Just beyond the buck, I booted four does, also feeding, but my antlerless tag was already filled. Back at the parking lot, I heard hunters griping about not seeing deer. But I knew where their boot tracks ended and that beyond, deer life was going on as it always had.

Go long and deep into the woods or go short and shallow just off the road? Which should a deer hunter do? Maybe both on the same outing.

Hunting in a neighboring state last fall, I combined my hiking urge to go long and deep with my better judgment that my best chances were short and shallow. Arriving from home too late in the morning to take advantage of early deer and hunter movement, I decided to explore the open timber company ground. I hunted my way to the top of the hill and past it. Along the way I clumsily kicked up a bedded forkhorn. A branch I blundered on cracked underfoot like a gunshot, and the buck bolted out of shotgun range. Had I been quiet and observant, I might have been dragging, rather than watching him get away.

In late afternoon, I returned from my walk to the upper edge of a thicket, about 150 yards from the car. I took a stand in a

blowdown, planning to spend the last hour there. I hoped that any deer bedded in that cover would get up toward evening to feed, as the pawing sign said they obviously did, on the beechnuts, grapes and briars. I might also see deer moving through the tangle to get away from hunters returning to their cars from the other side of the road.

Shortly before quitting time, a *shush*, *shush* in the dry leaves alerted me that something was coming. Deer. I had a permit for antlerless as well as antlered deer, and I pulled on the next opening they should walk through. I shot the lead doe, and she took off, nose-diving, over the crest of the hill. When I went down to her, I could see the road less than 100 yards away. The drag was all downslope, but the deer weighed as much as me. Although going long and deep and going short and shallow have their own advantages and disadvantages, right then I was very glad I was doing the latter. □

Fun Games — By Connie Mertz

What Do They Weigh?

Match each mammal with its weight, and then finish the statement below with the letters of the correct answers.

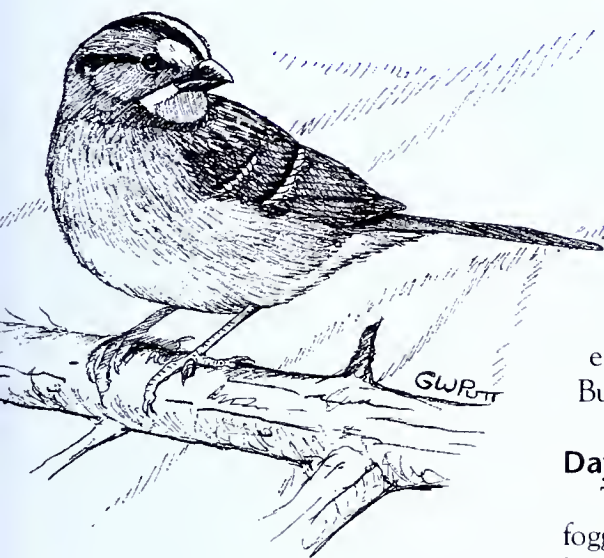
- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------|
| _____ Woodchuck | E 1.5 pounds |
| _____ Flying Squirrel | D 1/2 ounce |
| _____ Short-tailed Shrew | T 7 ounces |
| _____ Gray Squirrel | R 8 pounds |
| _____ Porcupine | S 2 pounds |
| _____ Red Squirrel | O 3 ounces |
| _____ Fox Squirrel | N 20 pounds |

All of these mammals are _____.

answers on p. 63

Looking for something to do to break the grip of cabin fever, and that's fun and a service to science, too? Participate in the . . .

Great Backyard Bird Count



IT'S MID-FEBRUARY, and once again I'm counting birds for science. When I first heard about the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), I was enthusiastic. Instead of only one day, like the Christmas Bird Count and National Migratory Bird Day, I had four days. And it took place during the psychologically longest winter month, even though numerically it's the shortest.

In 1998, the first year of this continent wide count, I had no access to the World Wide Web, and the GBBC is a web-based count. In 1999, previous engagements took up all but one day, so I submitted a grand

total of 14 species. I was curtailed by hospital tests and an icy terrain the following year, but I did manage 22 species.

Finally, 2001 came and all systems were go. I cleared my calendar and was ready to devote four days to it. Instead of my usual 2-hour daily walk, I now had an excuse to stay out all day for four days. But nature didn't cooperate.

Day 1

Thirty-eight degrees at dawn. A rainy, foggy day, so I do all my counting from the house. At the birdfeeders I count two black-capped chickadees, a mourning dove, white-breasted nuthatch, an American tree sparrow, a pair of red-bellied woodpeckers, two tufted titmice, two singing song sparrows, and three dark-eyed juncos. In the yard an American crow forages and a Carolina wren sings. I may be discouraged by the gloomy weather, but the birds seem energized. Still, this has been a terrible winter for both bird diversity and numbers.

Day 2

Twenty-six degrees at dawn, windy and overcast followed by heavy snow flurries,

but I go out anyway, determined to count birds on our recovering 9-year-old clearcut. For my trouble, I glimpse two ruffed grouse, hear an explosion of turkeys — and find the fresh tracks of three of them in the snow — and listen to a singing Carolina wren undeterred by bitter cold, wind and snow. One doughty black-capped chickadee is also abroad.

I haven't dressed properly for the cold, and I have forgotten my hot seat. On top of that, I am suddenly struck by a piercing pain in my back. Usually I sit or lie down when I get such a pain and it goes away, but because I forgot my seat, lying against the snowy bank only aggravates it. So, I slowly pull myself up and walk more than a mile, mostly uphill, along the steep Ten Springs Trail, snow falling, wind howling, my left hand pressed against the small of my back, stopping frequently to stand and rest. If there are any birds, I don't notice them.

It takes me an hour to get home. By then my sweat pants are soaked and frozen where I rested against the bank. After an hour of rest, my back has recovered, but I do the rest of my bird counting out the window — two song sparrows, eight juncos, two house finches, one red-bellied woodpecker, three mourning doves, two tufted titmice, two tree sparrows, and one white-breasted nuthatch. Another ho-hum list. But our son, Dave, who walks down the hollow road to the post office in town, reports a winter wren and a flock of golden-crowned kinglets.

Day 3

At last a beautiful day — 16 degrees and clear at dawn. When I can finally go out, at 10 a.m., I head across First Field and up the warm, south-facing slope of Sapsucker Ridge along Big Tree Trail. Several chickadees and titmice forage in the treetops. I hear the quiet tapping of a downy woodpecker and watch as it flies off. Titmice *peter-peter* back and forth, and then a Carolina wren joins in as if competing with

the titmice. I sit and share time with the wren as it perches for half an hour on a tree limb near the ground, and we bask together in a patch of sunlight.

Finally, reluctantly, I continue my walk, hearing nothing but wind as I follow the ridgetop to the Norway spruce grove, and then on to the Far Field. It's as if all the birds have fled.

Then, in the woods beyond the Far Field, I hear and see a hairy woodpecker, a white-

breasted nuthatch, chickadees and titmice. Coming back along the Far Field Road, I hear the high-pitched calling of a golden-crowned kinglet, but I can't call it down by *pishing*. Why is it whenever I count birds for science, I never hear or see the numbers and species I usually hear or see on a daily basis, such as common ravens and red-tailed hawks?

In mid-afternoon, I go out again, beguiled by the sunlight and long shadows, hoping to catch some new birds along Greenbrier Trail. Two crows caw overhead and I hear a ruffed grouse, assorted chickadees and titmice. Best of all is a foraging pileated woodpecker.



I sit in silence beneath my favorite double white oak tree on Dogwood Knoll, soaking up the rapidly retreating sunlight, and hear only the rattling of dried leaves still clinging to the tree. When I drop down to our hollow road along Pit Mound Trail, I barely hear the calls of kinglets, chickadees and titmice over the rushing water of the ice-rimmed stream. Still, I have added two new species to my list today and the feeder juncos have increased to 20.

Day 4

Seventeen degrees and a red sunrise followed by clouds. The last day of the Great Backyard Bird Count and three Carolina wrens carol when I step outside, one from the side of Sapsucker Ridge, one from behind the shed, and a third from below the guesthouse. Again I'm fighting back pain as I head over to the old clearcut.

Two downy woodpeckers, several titmice and a ruffed grouse forage on Bird Count Trail. Two resident Canada geese honk along the ridgetop. A male cardinal ticks on and on in the greenbrier and then flies down across the trail in answer to another tick. A flock of 15 juncos twitters in a nearby tree. Titmice *peter*, a woodpecker drums, and a pileated woodpecker undulates overhead.

Below the bench blind I hear more Carolina wrens and see two female cardinals. I also have an excellent view of a golden-crowned kinglet in the loose company of a couple chickadees.

When I return home, I am greeted by a blue jay in the black walnut trees, and a pileated woodpecker in the old apple tree behind the guesthouse. It is, primarily, a pileated day, as a pair fly into the yard after lunch. The male drums on an old grape arbor fence post, and I watch him through binoculars from our bow window.

Later, Dave hears the quavering cry of an eastern screech owl outside the guesthouse. Altogether, we have counted 22 species, the same as last year, despite my spending more hours outside.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is not a contest, though. It's an attempt to document the distribution and numbers of birds at the end of winter throughout the continent before spring migration begins in March. A project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society, it combines high-tech web tools with observations of birds made by families, individuals, classrooms and community groups who count the numbers and kinds of birds that visit their feeders, local parks, schoolyards and other areas during any or all of the four count days. Then they enter their observations in a user-friendly, state-of-the-art web site.

In return, participants are rewarded by hourly updates on animated maps of the count as it progresses. Watching while lights blink on from the southern United States to Canada's Northwest Territories is fascinating. And each state has its own map and statistics.

The folks running the survey aren't interested in extremely rare birds. Their focus is on the more common birds and in keeping them common. "By tracking changes in bird distribution and abundance over time, such a vast database can serve as the SOS signal for species that may be in trouble," says John Fitzpatrick, director of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Scientists are already developing long-term studies based on the results of the GBBC. Back in 1998, common redpolls moved south out of Canada, probably in search of food. This finch and several others, such as white-winged and red crossbills, pine grosbeaks, and pine siskins, are thought to "irrupt biennially, as a result of a lack of food seeds in what is typically their year-round ranges," Fitzpatrick says. "But much of this phenomenon remains a mystery that participants in the Great Backyard Bird Count can help us solve."

Participants are also asked to report snow depth, so scientists can continue to study the connections between weather patterns and bird movements. For instance,

The 2002 GBBC takes place from February 15 through 18. Instructions for participating are found at www.birdsource.org and clicking on "Great Backyard Bird Count."

There is no fee or registration. In addition to results, the GBBC web site includes information on the spotlighted birds, bird-watching and bird-feeding tips, bird vocalizations, and more. You can contact the Cornell Lab of Ornithology at 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, New York 14850, call 800-843-2473, or e-mail cornellbirds@cornell.edu. Let's make Pennsylvania number one again!

American robins have been staying farther north than usual in the winter. Is it a coincidence that there has been little or no snow in these places? Does global warming have something to do with it?

Many bird species are declining. Back in 2000, the GBBC emphasized bald eagles, and as a result, participants reported several new high density bald eagle roosts in such places as northern Utah, northern Florida, southeast Texas, and South Dakota.

In 2001 GBBC participants were supposed to pay special attention to several woodpecker species, including red-headed woodpeckers and northern flickers, both of which are declining. Bobwhite quail in the East and scaled quail in the Southwest are also dwindling due to the loss of brushland/shrub habitat, development and cattle grazing. Cats also prey on them in suburban areas. For these reasons, the 2001 GBBC spotlighted quail.

Finally, to fulfill one of their ultimate goals — a hemisphere-wide monitoring of bird populations — people participated in Venezuela, Paraguay and Belize for the first time.

Unfortunately, after expanding from 14,000 participants in 1998 to 42,000 in 1999 and 64,000 in 2000, they dropped back to 53,000 in 2001, probably because of the weather.

But Allison Wells at the Cornell Lab emphasizes that even if participants look for birds in bad weather and don't see them, they should report it. She also urges us to brave the weather if at all possible, or at least report birds at our feeders. Altogether, in every state and Canadian province, participants recorded 442 species and 4,555,411 individual birds.

Pennsylvania, which had had the most participants in 2000, dropped back to fifth place in 2001. Pennsylvanians identified a total of 114 species. The top 10 birds were common grackles, Canada geese, European starlings, dark-eyed juncos, house finches, American crows, house sparrows, mourning doves, red-winged blackbirds and American goldfinches — the same 10 nationally, although in slightly different order, except for the red-winged blackbirds, which were replaced by snow geese (Number 11 in PA).

Most Pennsylvanian participants clustered around the southeast and southwest, with significant numbers also in the Harrisburg and Allentown/Bethlehem areas. Central Pennsylvania, north to south, had the least participants. As for the spotlighted species, there were 220 northern flickers, 52 red-headed woodpeckers, and only two northern bobwhites, which were reported by one person.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is a welcome diversion near the end of winter. As someone concerned about the welfare of wild birds, I am also pleased that what provides entertainment for me is helpful to scientists trying to better understand birds and bird populations.

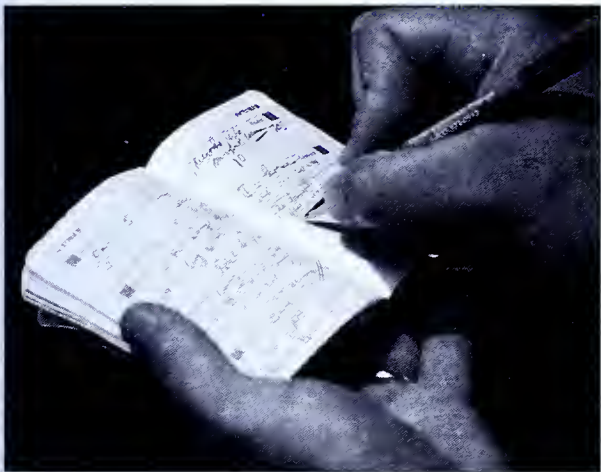
In the words of ornithologist Frank Gill, National Audubon's senior vice president for science, "I can't think of a better way to spend a little time on a late-winter day." □

Straight from the Bowstring

By Mike Raykovicz

The years have a way of slipping away, and because most of us don't have a photographic memory, keeping a written record of every hunt can come in handy.

"Deer" Diary



WHEN MAKING ENTRIES in a diary, include a comment or two about the hunt. By comparing entries from previous years, sometimes subtle patterns that could spell success later in the current season may become evident.

SATURDAY, October 5, 1985, was the opening day of bow season, and my wife's sister's wedding day. Needless to say, I couldn't hunt. Prior to opening day, I had scouted several areas and placed my portable stand near a grove of apple trees on SGL 219 in Bradford County. Unable to hunt, I offered my stand to my friend Dave Smith.

Dave, an engineer by profession, was busy with work commitments and had little time to do much scouting. Naturally, he was grateful for the offer to use my stand,

especially on opening day. Shortly after daylight, he spotted a deer heading for the apple trees. By 7:30 he had a 5-point.

I hunted the stand for the next three evenings, but with no luck. The sky was clear, the weather warm, and I enjoyed being outdoors, but deer eluded me. The fourth day I decided to hunt a few miles away, in Susquehanna County. On October 10 I saw my first buck, a spike, but didn't get a shot. The next day a 6-point passed my stand, but just like the spike, it didn't present the angle I wanted for the shot. I could only watch as it disappeared into the thick brush.

On Columbus Day, Monday, October 14, the morning was warm and pleasant. Three antlerless deer walked by my stand just after legal shooting time, but no buck followed. Remaining in my stand for the next three hours, I saw no more deer, but the squirrels and chickadees kept me entertained. I called it quits at 10 a.m.

At 4 p.m. I was back on watch, but despite hunting in an area that had a lot of sign, I saw nothing. For the remainder of the week I hunted every evening after work, but never got a shot at a buck. The weather from October 14 until the 23rd

remained warm and may have accounted for the scarcity of deer. Finally, on Friday, October 25, the weather turned cooler, and at 6:15 p.m. I arrowed a 7-point.

I don't have a photographic memory, but I can easily remember those events because I keep a written record of every hunt. I carry a small date book with me and never fail to record such things as stand location, temperature, weather, moon phase, wind direction, and the number and sex of deer I see. This information is invaluable from year to year because it provides insight as to which of my stands might prove most effective based on current weather conditions, wind direction, food availability or rutting activity.

The logbook is also useful for keeping a record of my preparations for every hunt. Notes include such things as the combination for my treestand lock, the hole configuration for my portable treestand bracket, the time I need to be in my stand before first light, and the time I need to be out of the tree in the evening. I even keep the names and telephone numbers of the landowner and my meat processor in case I need them.

I keep other information in my record book as well. Soft mast, such as apples, attracts and concentrates deer. The location of these apple trees and the dates the last apples fall are all noted for future reference. For example, I've found that apple trees drop their fruit at different times, so as the bow season progresses, some trees may be devoid of fruit while others still offer deer a tasty meal. A look at last year's diary quickly puts me on the right track.

I keep my journal in my shirt pocket, and before climbing down from my stand after a morning hunt, I record the time I arrived and legal shooting time. As the season wears on and the amount of daylight diminishes, this information proves useful in ensuring that I'm in my stand long before daylight, which is particularly useful when switching from Daylight Savings Time to Eastern Standard Time.

In the evening, after returning to my truck and before leaving for home, I record the wind and weather conditions, whether or not I saw deer and the time they appeared. If I see deer, I try to determine what they're feeding on and record that information as well. I find it's important to make an entry in my journal while the events of the day are still fresh in my mind. By doing so, I can make more informed decisions as to which of my stands might be productive on subsequent hunts. My journal helps me narrow down which thicket, woodlot or field edge to concentrate on based on the crops, mast or grass on which deer are feeding.

Keeping a journal adds to the quality of the hunting experience as well. One of my favorite bowhunting locations is near a large field of corn. Like most farms I hunt, woods and brushy areas surround the cornfield on several sides. Deer can be predictable, especially early in the season, and I usually see them inside the woodlot, casually feeding toward the edges of the corn. Because of the cover and the readily available food, the woods surrounding the cornfield are an excellent early season location, but there are factors that must be considered.

According to my hunting journal, the cornfield I hunt is usually harvested, weather permitting, the third week in October. The field is a large one, and it takes several days for the landowner to harvest it. The work usually begins in mid-morning, after milking chores are completed, and continues until late in the afternoon. Truthfully, the noise associated with harvesting the corn bothers me more than it bothers the deer, so I hunt a different area of the farm until the crop is in. This is the type of information I constantly use throughout the season. By hunting a less busy area of the farm, I am able to stay out of the landowner's way when he is working. I feel this is a good arrangement for both of us. Knowing when certain field crops are likely to be harvested is useful

information, but other facts related to the hunt are just as important.

One of the things I record in my journal is the moon phase on each evening I hunt, and the number of deer sightings during this period. Volumes have been written about the effects of the moon on deer behavior, especially before or during the rut. Some noted outdoor writers have gone so far as to predict the actual onset of the rut based on the occurrence of November's full moon. I'm not convinced it's that easy.

Factors such as weather, the make-up of the herd, and hunting pressure all affect deer sightings by hunters. After keeping a deer diary for more than 20 years, I'm convinced that the number of deer I see diminishes during the period of a full moon. Other hunters I know, and whose observations on deer behavior I trust, report the same thing. I know there is research that might prove otherwise, but the information recorded in my journals definitely shows I see fewer deer when the moon is full. According to my journal entries, I see more deer from my stand the week prior to, and just after, a full moon.

I am not offering this opinion as scientific fact, it's just my personal observation based on years of experience and the number of deer sightings recorded in my journals. While the number of deer seen by hunters during the period of a full moon may be reduced, this does not mean deer activity is curtailed. Deer may be just as active as they were earlier in the month, but it is my opinion that during a full moon, deer move to their feeding areas long after legal shooting time and back to the bedding areas before first light. The bright light cast by the moon may account for the reduced number of deer sightings, especially when the sky is clear or if cloud cover is minimal. Some may disagree with my opinion, but I can only point out that my records show a pattern of deer behavior in the area of northeastern Pennsylvania where I hunt that leads me to expect fewer

deer sightings during the time of a full moon.

Moon charts and predictions by so-called whitetail experts are currently in vogue, and some hunters put a great deal of stock in them. I find them interesting, but my advice is to depend on your own observations based on what you see in your hunting area. Do some research by reviewing your daily logs from previous years and note which phase of the moon produced the most deer sightings in your area. Be sure to note the time of day and weather conditions, and then have fun comparing what you find to be true for your area with what the experts predict.

Weather is another important factor affecting deer activity, and for that reason I carefully note the prevailing weather conditions each day I hunt. Rain, fog, cloud cover, temperature and wind all contribute to the degree of deer activity. Paying attention to these factors can give you insight as to what to expect when you arrive at your hunting location.

For example, if for some reason I had just one day to hunt during the entire season, I would pick a cool, dark, cloudy day with no wind and a slight drizzle. Deer seem to come out from under rocks to feed on the lush farm grasses during these weather conditions. Contrast these conditions with a bright, windy day, and I predict the number of deer seen will be significantly fewer. Previous entries in a deer diary can help you decide which stands will be most productive if there is a strong wind blowing, and where to go if deer seem to be scarce in your hunting area.

As October fades into November and rutting activity increases, previous journal entries can help predict when deer are likely to be most active. For example, I've found that on cold November mornings I don't necessarily have to be in my stand at first light, and that it's sometimes better to hunt later in the morning. When the early morning temperature is in the teens, it may be difficult to remain in a stand for any

length of time. With temperatures this cold, I've climbed down from my stand after spending less than two hours on watch. This means it's about 8:30 and I'm moving about. This is definitely not a good thing, especially when the opportunity for seeing a buck is high.

More years ago than I care to remember, I hunted on a friend's farm near the edge of an overgrown field for three consecutive mornings. Daybreak was a disappointment as far as deer activity was concerned. Despite what seemed like ideal conditions, I didn't see any deer. The final morning, as I stood cold and shivering, I thought about quitting for a few hours when I spotted a beautiful 8-point casually making its way through the frost covered goldenrod. I didn't get a shot, but the sighting renewed my resolve to stay. About 20 minutes later, a 4-point followed by another of equal size, moved through the hoary maze of trails crisscrossing the field. None of the bucks presented a shot, but just seeing them made me forget my discomfort. I decided to stay a little longer.

It wasn't long after the pair of 4-points passed that I noticed a doe and two button bucks coming toward me. They fed near me for several minutes and then moved on. Six deer within an hour was not a bad way to finish off a morning that started off so poorly. My fingers were stiff and my toes were numb, but I learned something that day. After climbing out of my stand and getting some circulation back into my extremities, I noted the time and weather conditions. By comparing my records over the next few years, I could see this was not a chance encounter.

According to my records, on cold, clear, November mornings, when thick frost is

likely to be covering everything, I see more bucks from my stand between 9 and 11. I don't see deer all the time, of course, but my diary tells me I'm more likely to see a buck if I'm on watch during these hours. Consequently, on cold November mornings, I sometimes sleep a little later and climb into my stand about 8:30. This means I'm able to be on watch from 8:30 to about 11, depending on the temperature and the weather. Psychologically, I'm at peak expectation for seeing a buck, and many times I'm not disappointed.

When making entries in my diary, I always include a comment or two about the hunt. By comparing entries from previous years, I sometimes see subtle patterns that could spell success later in the current season. For example, no bucks came into my rattling last year, so this year I'll try rattling and grunting and see if that doesn't prove to be more effective.

Have deer spotted you in your stand? Break up your silhouette by camouflaging the area in back of you with pine boughs. Last season, a deer approached from behind me and spooked. This season I intend to camouflage the site with hemlock boughs so I'm not spotted again. Did a buck investigate your grunting last season but fail to provide a shot? Consider placing your treestand in a location other than the one from which you saw the buck.

Finally, it's often the little things that separate successful hunters from unsuccessful ones. Keeping a detailed journal can improve your hunting odds by helping to prepare and plan the appropriate resources needed for a successful season. Keeping a deer diary is a perfect way to avoid unpleasant surprises, and to keep things interesting in the years ahead. □

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

The Shooters' Corner

By Don Lewis

Used to be common to see a Woolrich-clad hunter carrying a .35 Remington or .348 Winchester. For the most part, those big bores have been replaced by the .270 and .30-06, but will these favorites become obsolete some day?

Old Versus New

"THIS BIG GAME season will be my 50th year of hunting in Elk County," an old-timer I ran into told me. "Everything has changed for the better, except deer cartridges. Too much emphasis has been put on smaller cartridges, and it's common knowledge the big bores of the past made instant kills.

"My father and grandfather had a camp not too far from Boot Jack in Elk County. Both had Model 86 Winchester lever action rifles. Granddad's was a .45-90 and Dad stuck with the .45-70.

"My granddad often told me that he and a group of local deer hunters with all their

camping gear left Kittanning on the Pennsylvania Railroad. I don't know all their connections, but they were met at Ridgway by a local landowner with two teams of horses pulling two large sleds or wagons. One was for the hunters and their gear, and the other was filled with straw. He said it was about a 2-hour ride to their campsite, which consisted of two tents—one for sleeping, the other for cooking. The load of straw was scattered over the floor of the sleeping tent, and a small wood stove (furnished by the landowner) was set up in the kitchen tent. There was no heat in the sleeping tent. When all was in order and a supply of wood was carried into the kitchen tent, the landowner left, with the understanding that he would be back early the next Sunday to take them (and their deer) to the train station."

This is not a column about deer hunting in the 1920s, but I can't close this episode without telling about one new hunter to the camp who put on pajamas to go to bed.

TIM LEWIS was 12 years old when he got this buck with one shot from a .348 Winchester Model 71.

Helen Lewis





Things change with time, and although the large numbers of deer once found in many areas of Pennsylvania's northern "Big Woods" are gone, nicer deer, like ASHLEY LEWIS'S (no relation to Don) buck taken in Potter County on the 2001 season opener, are showing up because of reduced hunting pressure. Bucks are living longer and, therefore, are sporting bigger racks.

About two o'clock in the morning, he scrambled out of his blankets and put his hunting clothes on, including his Woolrich coat, and literally dived under the covers.

The big bore cartridges were popular during the late 1800s and the early 1900s. When smaller caliber cartridges began to infiltrate the big game hunting ranks, however, the big bores didn't just roll over and die. In fact, some ammunition manufacturers produced cartridges for a few of these old-timers well into the 1930s.

There's no question that many things have changed for the better in the shooting world, but I think the man in the beginning of this article was somewhat off base in saying that big bore cartridges are better for deer. It's true many changes in gun building have taken place, and it's just as true that deer hunting has also changed.

Back in the big-bore days, deer hunting took place in dense woods, and I suspect that back then most deer were killed well within one hundred yards.

A veteran deer hunter in our community hunted in the Dents Run area in Elk County. He used a .35 Remington in a Model 114 Remington pump with open sights and dropped more than three dozen bucks. His shots ranged from 25 to slightly more than one hundred yards.

These days those forests are much older and, therefore, much more open. Also, deer have become abundant in the farmlands of southern Pennsylvania. This shift changed not only the way deer are hunted, but also the cartridges used. The .35 Remington, .32 Winchester Special and the big .45 bores were not designed for super long range shooting, so the smaller, faster cartridges began to catch on.

Although the .30-06 came into existence in 1906 and the .270 Winchester around 1926, many deer hunters refused to give up their .30-30s, .348 Winchesters, .35 Remingtons and other lower velocity cartridges. There is still a fragment of these hunters who basically hunt in heavy timber and feel they have no need for a .270 Winchester, .30-06, 7mm Remington Magnum or any other long range cartridge. Admittedly, there's not a better brush cartridge than the old .348 Winchester.

For all sorts of hunting, tradition is a hard thing to overcome, even when evidence exists that another type of rifle or shotgun would be a wiser choice. I started hunting small game in the mid-1930s with a Stevens 20-gauge double. My hunting buddies and relatives warned me that the "little" 20 was a poor choice. My critics offered compelling evidence that the 16-gauge and 12-gauge powerhouses offered more speed and power. However, since I was just a 16-year-old kid, the "little" 20-gauge would be satisfactory, until I got big enough to handle the larger gauges.

Well, that was about 64 years ago, and I'm still using a two-barrel 20-gauge for ev-

everything from rabbits to pheasants. I now use an over/under instead of a side-by-side, but I wouldn't think of switching to a larger gauge.

I've been asked many times what is the best deer rifle. The word "rifle" in that question really means cartridge. Is there a best deer rifle or cartridge? There's an old adage that says, "Any rifle is a good deer rifle in the hands of a good hunter." Of course, we have to qualify that statement by pointing out that it means any cartridge that has sufficient power to make a clean kill with a bullet that is designed for big game shooting. That more or less rules out cartridges such as the .22 Hornet, .22-250, .220 Swift, and lower weight bullets in the 6mms. Sure, those cartridges have plenty of speed, but their bullets are designed for varmints, not deer or bears.

I'm sure what I just said will irritate a lot of hunters who have used .224-caliber rifles for big game. However, that doesn't mean that even the .220 Swift with its super high velocity is adequate for deer or bear as a general big game cartridge. Even a 60-grain .224 bullet does not retain enough lead after impact for deep penetration. The same holds true for 60- to 80-grain 6mm bullets, which are also designed to disintegrate quickly after impact. Common sense tells us a varmint bullet has to literally explode on impact to be effective on animals the size of prairie dogs, ground squirrels and woodchucks.

A friend hit a buck low in the shoulder with a 50-grain .224 bullet. The buck kept going and was dropped by another hunter a minute or so later. While my friend watched the buck being field-dressed, he examined the shoulder where his bullet had hit. The wound was fairly large, although the bone hadn't been broken. Apparently, the 50-grain bullet simply exploded on impact. A .270 Winchester, he admitted, or probably any other conventional big game cartridge, would have stopped the buck in short order. He also said it was his last deer hunt with a varmint cartridge.

Currently, there's a trend for short action magnum cartridges. To the best of my knowledge, the new Remington .300 Short Action Ultra Magnum and the 7mm Remington Short Action Ultra Magnum are the latest available. Remington says that the velocities and energies previously found only in a long action form are now available in the easy carrying, fast handling Remington Model 7 bolt action rifle.

About five years ago I switched to a Model 7 chambered for the 7mm-08. Since then I've found the Model 7's compact length and precision balance to fill all my needs in the cover I hunt, and the 7mm-08 is an ideal deer stopper. I have to admit that the 7mm Short Action Magnum cartridge with its 160-grain Nosler bullet that boasts a ballistic coefficient of .475 and a muzzle velocity of 2,960 fps (2,390 at 300 yards) has plenty of appeal. Energy at 300 yards is 2,029 foot pounds. Zeroed in at 200 yards, the 160-grain 7mm bullet is around 6½ inches low at 300 and almost 20 inches low at 400 yards. If I hunted in open country with this setup, I would sight it in four inches high at 100 yards, which would give me a zero range of around 325 yards. The bullet would be 16 inches low at 400 yards. At 150 yards, the bullet would be slightly more than one inch high and a little more than two inches low at 250 yards. The 300 Ultra Short Action Magnum generates similar velocities with a 180-grain Nosler Partition bullet, which has a BC of .474.

I'm not being demeaning when I state that the big bores of the past are heroes of another time. And in the same breath I have to say that there might come a time when the .30-06, .270 Winchester, 7mm-08 and .280 Remington, plus several other favorites of today, will ride into the sunset, too, just like the big bore cartridges have done. □

Fun Game answers: R, O, D, E, N, T, S. — RODENTS.

Night Flight

FOR A WEEK OR MORE after the hunt, when you lie down to sleep, the geese fly in on the backs of your eyelids. They are a mass of black motion and dangling feet against milky gray — not unlike the real sky over Chester County cornfields at dawn. After you have been among them, you cannot bid them not to come in the night any more than you could command them to appear before the gun that morning.

There, waiting in the chill, you looked back to the left once more and they were there above the trees. At first they were like an errant scratch you might make on gray paper with a sharp pencil. But then the vein of birds wheels and hardens, each goose now with crisp edges, and they are coming. The ragged line dips and waves. Their wing beats seem too shallow to push them onward, but they are bigger now and swelling with each pulse. Still more pencil lines rise up behind them above the oaks. The honking, urgent in the distance, reaches you well ahead of them. They drift now, onward and down under cupped wings, dipping right then left, letting their pinions manage the landing. In close, their calls are sociable and not so raucous. Now you see the white cheek patch and the pink insides of their mouths at each honking, maybe a breath of vapor gushing out above black bill, a beacon of bright black eye.



Go back over it all again and again, and the thing you remember least is the shooting. You sat up out of the grass — you must have. There were two quick thuds in the shoulder, a blast that obscured the honking, and one goose splashes into the pond. Another skids and spins across the ice. The rest of them flail the air, swirling upward and away like a living black tempest, tangling with the unsuspecting oncoming throngs.

If you have spent your outdoor life in the uplands you know a different kind of encounter. There, deer pass singly and in silence. Grouse show their fanned tails in retreat. Turkeys skulk and pout; even in flocks they do not confront you with the legions, the motion and the din of geese. Canada geese are a seasonal bloom of unbridled abundance on the stoic brown fields of piedmont Pennsylvania. They come and go as if they were all a part of one huge organism that shifts north and south across the continent, the skeins of birds linked to the whole like the threads of mushroom mycelia that spread through the soil under a hundred-acre hilltop.

Being among them changes you, opens you up to wider possibilities, like a faint gray line changing and growing into a whirling mass of clamorous life. And when they are gone, for a night, for half a year, or forever, the silence in their wake is the loudest sound your heart will ever hear.

Ben Moyer

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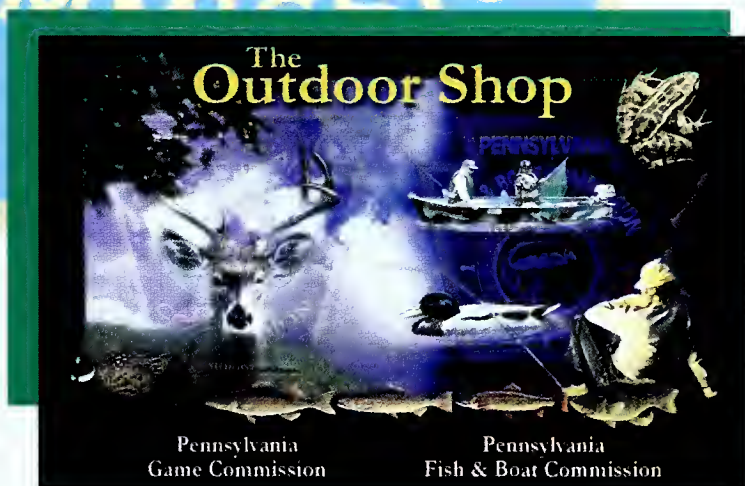
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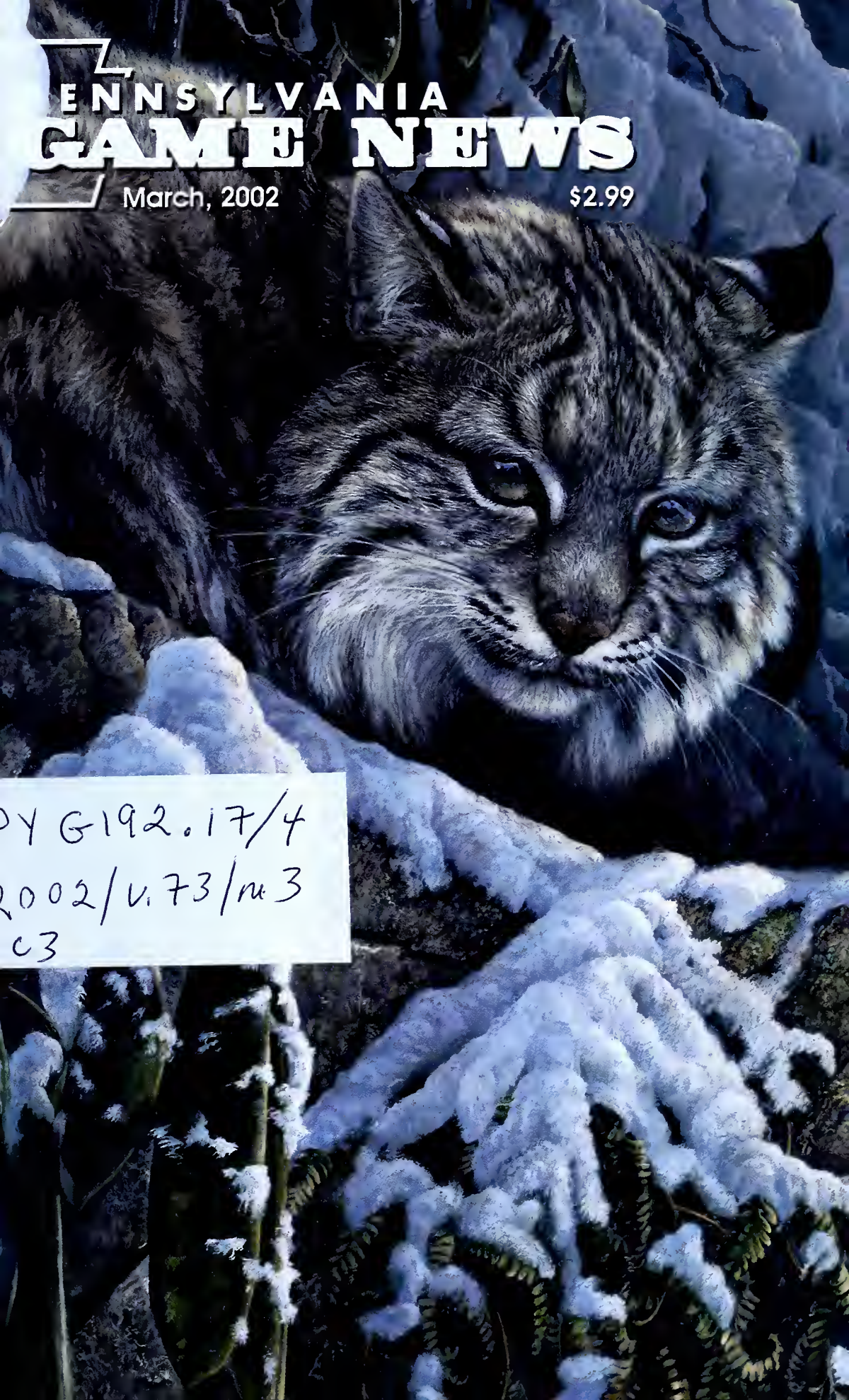
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COVER PAINTING BY LAURA MARK-FINBERG
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MAR 05 2002

PA GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS

PENNSYLVANIA GAME NEWS (ISSN 0031-451X) is published monthly for \$12 per year, \$34.50 for three years, or membership in Pennsylvania's Cooperative Farm-Game Project or Safety Zone Project; to Canada and all other foreign countries, \$13 U.S. currency, per year. Published by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Phone (717) 787-4250. Periodicals postage paid at Harrisburg, Pa. CHANGE OF ADDRESS: POSTMASTER: Send both old and new addresses to Pennsylvania Game News, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Allow six weeks for processing. Material accepted is subject to our requirements for editing and revising. Author payment covers all rights and title to accepted material, including manuscripts, photographs, drawings and illustrations. No information contained in this magazine may be used for advertising or commercial purposes. Opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Copyright © 2002 by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, an Equal Opportunity Employer, the programs of which are all administered consistent with the goals and objectives of Affirmative Action. All rights reserved.

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Newsstand consultant, Celtic Moon Publishing, 1-877-730-6263

Worth a Shot

THREE POINTS to a side; or, in 11 western counties, four to a side. After more than two years of study and debate, antler restrictions more restrictive than at any other time in the agency's history were formally proposed by the Board of Game Commissioners at the January meeting. Whether or not they receive final approval will be decided at the April 8-9 meeting.

Antler restrictions strike at the very essence of our deer hunting heritage. Since 1953 "2 points to a side or a spike 3 or more inches long" has defined a legal Pennsylvania buck. That standard is so ingrained into our deer hunting psyche that anything else is hard to imagine. But this isn't 1953. We need to adapt. We need to consider raising our standards. Society is changing, land uses are changing, deer populations are changing. Hunters need to change, too. And as hunters, we may very well have the most to gain.

For decades our deer herd has been above the limits of what the land can sustain. Deer depredation is a major agricultural problem; deer browsing is threatening our forests; deer in suburban developments and on our highways are causing all sorts of problems. This has come about largely because we hammer the adult males and overly protect the females. That Pennsylvania has the dubious distinction of killing a higher percentage of antlered bucks than any other state should be alarming enough to suggest a change.

Sure, if enacted, antler restrictions will force us to change the way we hunt, but the change can be good. We'll have to take more time to make sure the antlered deer is legal. We'll have to pass on bucks that have long been fair game. We'll also have to pass on bucks because we just won't be able to tell if there are 3 (or 4) points to an antler.

But weighing the advantages we stand to gain against what we're being asked to sacrifice, antler restrictions are worth a shot. We have a chance to improve the health of the deer herd, help bring deer numbers more into line with what the habitat can support, and we can, in just a couple years, have more exciting buck hunting than anybody has ever been able to imagine.

Along with new antler restrictions, it's also been proposed to allow junior license holders to use their regular hunting license "buck" tag to take an antlerless deer, anywhere in the state. And, like last year, there are also antlerless deer seasons slated for October for flintlock hunters, junior and senior license holders, Disabled Person Permit (to use a vehicle) holders, and Pennsylvania residents serving on active duty with the U.S. Armed Forces. See the complete 2002-03 seasons and bag limits package, beginning on page 37.

Even better, Dr. Gary Alt, again this winter and spring, is on a whirlwind statewide lecture circuit, explaining to packed houses what the new deer management initiatives are all about, and passing out copies of "Pennsylvania Whitetails: Creating New Traditions," a new 23-minute video. By all means, try to attend one of these, even if you've been to one in other years. — *Bob Mitchell*

letters

Editor:

When I picked up a November *Game News* at a newsstand here in New Jersey, a flood of emotions rushed over me. I hadn't seen your magazine in more than a decade, and I've just subscribed for the next three years. Reading the November issue brought back memories of two events I'll always cherish: going turkey hunting for the first time and shooting my first pheasant, both in the early '80s.

E.J. CUNEO III
BERLIN, NJ

Editor:

Thank you. I picked up bowhunting last year. Never got a shot off, but enjoyed being in the woods. This year, however, was different. I got a 9-point on the last day of the archery season. This may sound crazy, but if I had not read the articles in *Game News* over the past two years, I would be talking about the one that got away. The archery articles were the secret to my success. Shot placement and patience was the key.

E. MILLER
HATBORO

Editor:

A Pennsylvanian for 18 years, I moved to Wyoming to attend college, and I'm now an avid mule deer and elk hunter. However, when most people from Pennsylvania become excited about booking trips to hunt in the West, I look forward to my annual deer hunting trip to Pennsylvania.

There is something magical about Penn's Woods that no other hunting trip in the country holds for me.

The game has been plentiful and the cost of the nonresident license is very inexpensive for what's received. Please keep up the good work and keep the *Game News* coming.

E.K. DEHART
BOISE, ID

Editor:

In the February issue there is an error in the Black Bear — Gun category. My two sons both shot bears in 1987 that were measured by the Game Commission at 21-02 and 21-08, yet neither are listed in your records. Could you please review the listing?

JOSEPH ADAMS SR.
PITTSBURGH TOWNSHIP

Rest assured, your sons' trophies are in our master list. Listed in the February issue of Game News are only those trophies measured during the 2001 sessions — the new trophies, so to speak.

Editor:

I enjoy hunting, especially for turkeys, but being disabled, it's often hard to get to that perfect spot in the woods. I do the best I can, though, but it seems that every time I get settled on that perfect stump, it's owned by a pair of chipmunks that

sit there and call me everything but a hunter. Then all the blue jays in the county come around and see how much noise they can make. When they're finished, the squirrels come down, sit right next to me, and proceed to tell me a thing or two. After the woodpecker is done working on the dead tree next to me, a couple does come by and start to snort and stomp their hooves — after all the noisy crows have left, of course. And all I want is a quiet day in the turkey woods.

B. KEILBACK
RUFFS DALE

Editor:

Throughout the summer and fall we had been seeing a flock of 28 turkeys in our lawn and adjacent fields. After the September 11 attacks, I placed an American flag in the center of a barley field that had just been cut. One afternoon my mother watched the turkeys working around the flag, seemingly pledging their allegiance to the red, white and blue.

F. READ
CURWENSVILLE

Editor:

I feel the reason most people buy your magazine is for the deer hunting stories, yet you don't seem to be running very many lately.

K. KANAGY
BELLEVILLE

Your comments are welcome. Mail them to "Letters," 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Letters will be edited for brevity and clarity.

After years of planning, Pennsylvania's first elk hunt in more than 70 years came off without a hitch, and, therefore, few changes are being proposed for the 2002 hunt. Throw your name in the "hat" for next season; you just never know.

Elk Hunt 2001

By Bob D'Angelo

Game News Associate Editor

"THESE ARE exciting times," PGC biologist Rawley Cogan said as he kicked off the elk hunt orientation on Sunday, November 11, the day before Pennsylvania's first elk hunt in 70 years. And exciting times they were. By week's end, 27 of the 30 lucky hunters had filled their tags, and all those involved with the hunt considered it a resounding success.

Of the 27 elk taken, 14 were antlered and 13 antlerless. Twelve were harvested in Cameron County (6 antlered and 6 antlerless) and 15 in Elk (8 antlered and 7 antlerless). There were three firsts: first elk taken with a bow; first woman to take an elk; and the first disabled permit hunter to harvest an elk. But as you might imagine, every hunter had his or her own story. Here's how many of the hunts went.

"I wonder where the hunter who has a bull license for this management area is?" WCO Doty McDowell said to WCO Trainee Dave Allen, as we watched two big bulls sparring.

We had been on the move since 5:30, and I was doing my best to get on the scene as soon as the first elk was taken, to capture the historic event on film. We were along Route



BRADLEY KUHN, York, with his impressive 7x7 bull elk taken in Elk County.

120 near Sinnemahoning, and had already seen two other bulls and some cows.

An hour and a half later we met officers Denver McDowell and Bill Shultz, and they suggested that I come along with them. Denver claimed that now that I was with a couple veteran officers that the action would soon begin. And he was right!

A local resident, Al Dempsey, flagged us down and told us he had just seen an orange marker designating a kill site, and it had elk license number 1 written on it. (After killing an elk, each hunter was to mark a tree by the nearest road and a trail to the kill site, so a team of officers could take blood samples and the lungs for disease testing purposes.) We were there in 15 minutes.



Scott Rheam

MIKE HOFFMAN, front row, left, and guide HENRY STAUFFER, front row, center, with Game Commission staff, on site with the first bull elk taken during the 2001 season.

I followed the trail of orange markers across a stream and up a steep ridge. Elk County WCO Doty McDowell, who had arrived a few minutes after, caught up to me and when we crested the ridge we spotted the hunter. As I got closer and noticed antlers sticking up out of a depression, the magnitude of the event hit me: I was looking at the first legally harvested bull elk in Pennsylvania in 70 years.

"I'm happy," Mike Hoffman from East Greenville, Montgomery County, said over and over. "A bigger bull came up out of the bottom after I shot this one, but I'm satisfied with what I got."

Coincidentally, Hoffman had the number 1 elk license, and at 7:05 on November 12, 2001, his 5x5 451-pound (dressed) bull taken in Benezette Township, Elk County, was the first antlered elk taken in the new season. His guide, Henry Stauffer, had scouted the area well, and he was just as happy with Mike's kill.

A 410-pound cow elk taken by Isaac Ramer Jr. from Sunbury, Northumberland County, at 7 a.m. near Tunnel Hill in Gibson Township, Cameron County, was the first elk taken in the new season.

Todd Yoder, from Gilbertsville, Montgomery County, has the distinction of being the first hunter to take an elk with a bow during a Pennsylvania elk season. At 658 pounds, his 8x7 was also the heaviest elk taken during the hunt.

Todd has been hunting for 25 years, but never for elk. He spotted some elk early in the morning, but couldn't get close enough for a shot with his 7mm Rem. Magnum. A couple hours later, however, he spotted four big bulls in an area he had permission to hunt.

"For some reason, I grabbed my bow, and then hiked above

the elk and waited in the high grass and woods," Yoder said. "About a half hour later, the bulls worked within range, but the smallest one stood in front of the largest, preventing a shot. Finally, the largest bull came within 25 yards, or so I thought. It was actually farther, and my arrow sailed just

Bob D'Angelo



Coincidentally, MIKE HOFFMAN had the number 1 antlered elk license and took the first bull during the season.



Bob D'Angelo

TODD YODER with his 8x7 bull. Todd left his 7mm Rem. Magnum in the truck and took his elk with a bow.

under the bull. The startled elk lunged forward, but hesitated, and I slipped an arrow into its lungs. The bull ran off but went down within 50 yards."

Also on Monday morning, Kenneth Meier, from Bethel Park, Allegheny County, was checking out some food plots in management area 6 when his guide, Dave Spencer from Thunder Mountain Outfitters, suggested they hike back in on a pipeline to glass. They spotted a group of five antlerless elk about 125 yards away, and one shot from Meier's .270 was all it took to down his 378-pound cow.

Frank Lipski from Shavertown, Luzerne County, got the last elk on the first day. Hunting with guide Bob Decker from St. Marys, Frank spotted the lone elk early in the morning, and they set up where they thought it was heading. The elk evidently had other ideas, though, and went elsewhere. Patience prevailed, however, and at 4:50 Frank took with his .308 what he's pretty sure was that same animal, a 374-pound cow.

By the end of the first day, four antlered and four antlerless elk had been taken. Michael Yatsko, from South Connellsville, Fayette County, took a 316-pound cow in Gibson Township, Cameron County; Robert Winstel, from Pittsburgh, took a 608-pound 7x7 bull in Grove Township, Cameron County; and Joseph Yakobosky, Auburn, Berks County, dropped a 550-pound 6x7 bull in Gibson Township, Cameron County.

A festive atmosphere surrounded the check station that first day, as thrilled on-lookers watched as the elk were aged and weighed.

Dale Dickensheets from Hanover, York County, hunted elk once in Idaho and twice in Colorado, and bagged an elk in Colorado. He took the first elk — a 476-pound 6x7 bull — on the second day of the season, at 7:20 in Shippen Township, Cameron County.

"My guide, Phil Burkhouse, and I watched about 20 elk move into a meadow just before dark on Monday, so we decided to be back the first thing the following morning," Dickensheets said. "On Tuesday morning we could hear antlers clashing in the meadow, and we spotted two raghorns jousting. Then we spotted a herd of elk at



Bob D'Angelo

DALE DICKENSHEETS, with his 6x7 bull taken on November 13, shaking hands with ARNOLD GIOVANINI. Arnold was 14 when he participated in Pennsylvania's second elk season, in 1924.

the base of the mountain, about 300 yards away, and noticed a nice bull among them. We stalked to within 80 yards, and the elk nervously milled around in the birch thicket. I couldn't get a shot, because some cows were in the way, but finally they moved. My .338 broke the silence and elk exploded out of the thicket. We couldn't find any evidence of a hit, but following the herd we found my bull within 200 yards."

Joseph Trendler from New Hope in Bucks County bagged his 7x6 576-pound trophy at 2:45 p.m., in Gibson Township, Cameron County. Trendler says that after an uneventful morning hunting where elk had been spotted the day before, he and his guide, Rick Martz, and Denny Snyder — who was videotaping the hunt for his TV show "USA Outback"— decided to investigate a food plot on the other side of management area 4. They hiked back a gated road for about a mile when they began to see increasing amounts of elk sign. When they reached the grass and clover food plot it was obvious that a lot of elk had been using it. At 1:30 Martz spotted an elk bedded in the woods about 150 yards away. The hunter and guide set up on the edge of the woods, and through a spotting scope determined the animal had antlers.

"The wait was agonizing," Trendler said. "We kept an eye on him as other elk began to move toward the food plot. It was exactly 2:45 when he stood up, offering a perfect shot. I squeezed the trigger on my .338 and he ran about 30 yards. Rick told me to hit him again, and then it was over. It was the most exciting experience in my 45 years of hunting."

Glenn Sharpe's middle name should be patience. While hunting with guides Willis Sneath, Larry Price and Dale Snow, the 45-



Bob D'Angelo

GLENN SHARPE with PGC Executive Director VERN ROSS and Glenn's 7x4 bull.

year-old Townville, Crawford County, resident passed up 11 bulls before 7 a.m. on the opening day.

"After learning I had drawn a license, my guides and I scouted on six weekends and had located several really big bulls," Sharpe said. "On the second day I had to be in DuBois for kidney dialysis, and didn't get back to hunt until 12:30. I was watching a food plot when I spotted a 5x5 bull late in the afternoon, but guide Larry Price said another bull was behind it. When I finally got a look at it, I could see it was a heavy antlered elk. Out of sight, Willis hiked to the other end of the field to get a better look at the bull, and then motioned for Larry and me to get down there. One shot with my 7mm Rem. Magnum and I had the elk of my dreams — a 7x4 with a lot of mass."

Rounding out Tuesday's harvest were John Stanton from Willow Grove, Montgomery County, who connected on a 455-pound antlerless elk in the Johnsons Run area of Benezette Township, Elk County, and Karen Shilling of Howard, Centre County, who got a 468-pound cow in Shippen Township, Cameron County.



Bob D'Angelo

KAREN SHILLING is the first woman hunter to take an elk in an established season. She got her 468-pound antlerless elk on November 13, 2001.

Six elk were harvested November 14, including the oldest bull — a 12.5-year-old, 576-pound 7x7 — taken by Bradley Kuhn from York, York County. Kuhn's elk was taken in the Grant Hill Road area in Benezette Township, Elk County, at 3:45 p.m.

Kuhn said his elk hunt really began on September 30, when an outdoor writer called and told him that his name had been drawn at the Elk Festival in St Marys for an antlered elk license.

"My son, Shane, and I could hardly believe the news, and we immediately became overwhelmed with excitement and anticipation," Kuhn said. "Every weekend prior to the season we went up to scout out the area I had drawn in.

"We met my guide, Don "Woody" Wood, but on that first day the only elk we saw were a few feeding near some homes in Grant. We hunted hard

BRADLEY KUHN, center, with guide DON "WOODY" WOOD on his right, with Brad's 7x7 bull.

on the second day, hiking up and down the steep mountainsides, and although we spotted three bulls, we held out for a chance at a bigger one. That chance came on Wednesday afternoon when we spotted a beautiful 7x7 just east of Grant. A surprising sense of calmness came over me as I steadied my old Springfield .30-06 on the huge animal. When the bull dropped, I couldn't stop yelling. All of the scouting and time spent prior to that moment had paid off."

Earlier that morning, James "Dick" Fagan (retired PGC Bureau of Law Enforcement director) from Marysville, Perry County, took a 398-pound cow in Shippen Township, Cameron County. Fagan has been hunting for 51 years, and when he found out he had drawn an elk license he contacted his brother, Ken, in Florida, and Ken was more than willing to go along. A few weeks before the season, Fagan contacted landowners in management area 3 who were experiencing crop damage, and received permission to hunt on two properties. He also did plenty of scouting on SGL 14, and that's where he started on opening morning.

"We hiked in to a food plot and immediately spotted two elk, but after stalking closer, discovered both were bulls, and then they began sparring," Fagan said. "It was a

Bob D'Angelo



great way to start the hunt, but those were the only elk we saw in two days of hunting.”

On the way back to Driftwood on Tuesday evening they stopped at one of the landowners who had given them permission to hunt. “He indicated that a small group of elk had been on his property, and that we should be there early on Wednesday morning,” Dick said.

That morning the Fagans were watching a hay field in the vicinity of Sterling Run when they spotted a big bull. Not long after, two antlerless elk appeared. “We were caught in the open,” Dick said, “so we got into a prone position. Ken thought the distance was 200 yards, but I said it was farther. As we deliberated, one of the elk turned broadside and I squeezed off a shot from my .308. Ken was operating his video camera, and because I had lost sight of the elk at the rifle’s recoil, I asked if I had made a good hit. Ken said the animal had reared up before running off.”

The two brothers found the elk in the next field. It had run 90 yards after a perfect heart shot. They paced off the distance of the shot — 292 yards. Dick says it was great just being part of the first elk hunt, that taking an elk was a bonus.

Hunting with guide Gerald Shickling, Daniel Burk from Ford City, Armstrong County, took a 6x6 616-pound bull on Wednesday, in Grove Township, Cameron County.

After sending in his elk license application, Burk forgot all about it. “I’m the guy who buys a \$1,000 worth of raffle tickets each year and never wins a thing,” he said. “The night after the drawing, the phone rang and some guy on the other end asked if I was Dave Burk. I told him no, that I was Dan Burk. He said a Dave Burk drew an antlered elk license. It wasn’t until Monday, when I called the Game Commission that I learned I had drawn what turned out to be the last antlered elk per-



Bob D’Angelo

DANIEL BURK with his 6x6 bull taken on Wednesday, November 14, 2001.

mit. Needless to say, I didn’t get much sleep that weekend.”

Burk’s father had grown up around Sinnemahoning, and weeks before the season they scouted the management area where his license was good for. They saw plenty of elk, but not in their area. Burk’s good luck struck again, however, when he learned that an acquaintance who knew the area had a guide permit.

Burk and his party hunted the opener in the northern part of their area, and saw 50 or 60 deer, but no elk. The party spent a good portion of the second day getting permission to hunt some private land where local people had told them there were a lot of elk. That evening, however, Clinton County WCO John Wasserman informed them they could hunt in two other management areas. Dan and his dad had spotted two huge bulls near Sinnemahoning, and late Tuesday night they obtained permission to hunt some private ground near there.

Late that afternoon, Jerry Shickling and Burk set up near an old orchard, and Burk said it wasn’t long until some bulls started filtering down from the

higher ground. "As we were checking each bull we spotted a 6x6 that stood out from the others. It wasn't the biggest bull we had seen, but it had an even rack. I concentrated on a spot behind the bull's shoulder and squeezed off a shot from my .30-06 sporterized Springfield that had belonged to my grandfather. The bull shuddered, took three or four steps and then dropped."

Burk's hunt is interesting enough, but there was another uncanny aspect to it. "As I walked up to the elk," Burk said, "I realized that from where I had shot I could look across Grove Run, to where my grandfather is buried. He would have been proud to know that his old Springfield was back."

Also taken on Wednesday were a 432-pound cow by John Carben from Butler in Gibson Township, Cameron County; a 4x4 458-pound bull by Frank Stock from Churchville, Bucks County, in Benezette Township, Elk County; and a 363-pound antlerless elk by James Warrender from Slippery Rock, Butler County, also in Benezette Township.

George Roth from Westfield, Tioga County, had made two trips to Montana for elk, but came back empty-handed both times. On the fourth day of the Pennsylvania season, however, he harvested an 8x7 bull in Jay Township, Elk County.

Hunting with Quehanna Outfitters, George spotted several small bulls on the first two days of the season, and on the third day he spotted a real dandy traveling with two smaller bulls above Weedville. The elk winded the hunter and guide John Azzato and moved off. They trailed the elk for two hours, but never got close enough for a shot.

Back the next morning, they spot-

ted the elk again. This time Roth got a 50-yard shot at the huge bull and his .30-06 did the job. George Roth's wife, Lynne, along as camp cook, says George is generally a quiet man, but that there was jubilation in the woods that morning when hunter and guide realized just how big the elk was. The 8½-year-old 614-pound bull had antler beams that measured 46 inches in length with a 44-inch spread.

Three other elk were taken that Thursday. Harry Crough, Pittsburgh, got a 513-pound 6x6 in the Dents Run area in Benezette Township, Elk County; Michael Bradley, from Rockwood, Somerset County, a 596-pound 8x7 in the Dark Hollow area of Benezette Township; and Charles Zabrosky, from Carmichaels, Greene County, a 238-pound cow, also taken in Benezette Township.

Three elk were taken on Friday: a 526-pound 6x6 bull by Leroy Stotler Sr., from Apollo, Westmoreland County, in Benezette Township; a 450-pound antlerless elk by Craig Wetzel, from Copley, Northampton County, in Shippen Township, Cameron County; and a 173-pound calf by Rocco Rio Sr., from Penfield, Clearfield County, in Benezette Township.

James Weiler, from Newmanstown, Lebanon County, was the last hunter to bag an elk, a 305-pound cow on Saturday, in Benezette Township.

Game Commission Executive Director Vern Ross possibly summed up Pennsylvania's first modern elk hunt best while standing beside Brad Kuhn's huge 7x7 bull taken on November 14. The hunter, guide and agency personnel were gathered around the elk, waiting for a trailer to arrive as darkness closed in, when Ross said, "You know, 100 years from now this will be in a history book. We've made history here." Then, under a star-filled sky, from a ridge across the road, a bull bugled. □

The Woman Behind the Badge

By Bill Bower

Bradford County WCO, Retired



Bill Bower

MARY ALICE BOWER's dedication and work behind the scenes enabled BILL BOWER to be the best WCO he could be during his long career with the Game Commission.

AFTER 36 YEARS as a wildlife conservation officer, I retired in January. Looking back on my career, it's hard to believe that 36 years have passed so quickly since taking the deputy test at the Southeast Region office in 1966.

All Pennsylvania wildlife conservation officers go through the Game Commission training school, the Ross Leffler School of Conservation. I was part of the 13th Class, which entered the school in 1968 and was graduated in the spring of 1969. In the spring of 2002, the 26th Class will graduate. So, you can see that not many men and women get the chance to become

WCOs. One young officer, Matt Grebeck, said it best, "Becoming a wildlife conservation officer is to a hunter what playing professional football is to a high school football player." In the Bible, Matthew 22:14 states, "for many are called, but few are chosen." This verse refers to the reward for the willingness to serve. I have often said that if the Lord made a better job, he kept it for himself.

Through the years I have had many heroes who I have looked up to and tried to pattern my work ethics after. There have been supervisors, other WCOs, deputies, and even sportsmen who have helped me along the way. However, looking back on my career, I can't think of any-

one who has helped me more than my wife, Mary Alice.

The Game Commission has a proud history, and I believe our conservation officers are some of the best in the world. If you look behind the badges, however, you're going to find spouses who have worked behind the scenes, who have made our agency what it is today.

One of the requirements of early game protectors — and refuge keepers — was that they had to have a wife who was willing to live in a remote area of the state, have her home turned

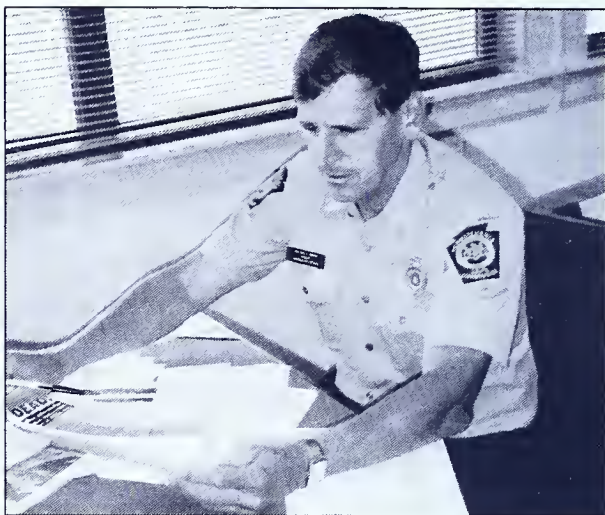
into a state office, a veterinary clinic, a police station, a restaurant and a meeting place for other officers. The wives were expected to be private secretaries, telephone operators, and nurses for injured animals.

From the time I entered the training school, Mary Alice became father and mother for our two sons. And like most, going to the Ross Leffler Training School meant a reduction in pay, which wasn't too bad while attending the school, because I received some veteran's assistance. Upon graduation and moving to my assignment in Bradford County, however, I remember when we received our first paycheck. Mary Alice opened the envelope, sat down on the steps and actually started to cry. "Bill, I don't know how we are going to live on this," she said. After the initial shock, though, she said, "We'll just have to watch our pennies."

Through the years, there were times when I spent long hours away from home, times when she held supper for hours, so I would have a hot meal. Many times she became worried sick, not knowing if I was okay.

In the beginning, it was expected that the wives of officers would take all telephone calls coming into their homes when the officers were not there. People who were having a problem with wildlife would call our home and want me to come right away. Many times they would take their frustrations out on Mary Alice. Often, by the time I was able to return their calls, they had calmed down.

Then there were times Mary Alice would say about a caller, "I think something is wrong. This person sounded nervous, perhaps trying to hide something. You better check on this some



Bob D'Angelo

BILL BOWER says that he has had many heroes in the Game Commission that he's looked up to and tried to pattern his work ethics after. If you ask the rank and file in the agency, however, you'd find more than one person that feels Bill is a fine example of what a WCO should be.

more." Many times her intuition lead me to getting a good deer case.

Even up to my last days on the job, I kept my phone number listed, with Mary Alice probably being the only wife in the state still taking Game Commission calls. During my career, I received a lot of calls with information about violations. I also received a lot of nuisance wildlife calls, not only from my district but other districts in Bradford County, surrounding counties and some from as far away as Pittsburgh and Philadelphia.

Many home projects were never started or were put off and never completed because a call would come in and off I would go, to chase a violator or take care of something that had to be done right away. (Of course, sometimes, the degree of importance was an excuse to get out of chores. After all, spending time in the fields and forests sure beats home repairs.)

I remember one time in particular when I had promised Mary Alice that I would stay home and do a list of chores she had for me. It just so happened that I had received an arrest warrant for an individual who had moved into my district from the

southeastern part of the state. Because my neighboring officer, Steve Gehringer, had had dealings with this individual, I called him to see if he would help me serve the warrant.

"I'm free today," Steve said. "I'll be over right away."

While waiting for Steve, though, I got a call about an injured deer and went to take care of it. Steve arrived before I returned, and Mary Alice

said to him, "You know, Bill was going to work around the house for me today, but he said you wanted him to help serve a warrant."

"Wait a minute. He called me to help him, I didn't call him," Steve said. (That Steve never could keep his mouth shut.)

As the years went by our children grew up, went to college, got married and had children of their own. Through those years money was tight and the working days were long. Mary Alice has always stood by my side, encouraging me when I was down and telling me when she thought I was off track. She has always been and still is my number one protector. Although she can say things about me that might not be too flattering, no one else would dare do so in her company.

She has opened our home for deputy meetings, made meals for retirement parties, attended meetings with me, and proof-read letters, newspaper articles and books. Most people, especially outside my district and county, know me because of my Field Notes in *Game News*. Although I did and do write Field Notes myself, Mary Alice

makes them sound much better than I ever could.

In the early years, violators would come to our home to pay their fines on what was called a field receipt. Many of these individuals could be rather unpleasant. During deer season, Mary Alice would often be baking for Christmas, and many a time violators were offered fresh baked cookies and coffee.

Beaver trappers would bring their catch to our home to be tagged, and anyone who has ever handled a beaver knows about their particular odor. Some trappers would plunk their catch right down on the kitchen floor. Muddy boot prints and barn smells were common in our home.

Today, things have changed somewhat. The phone has been taken out of the WCO's home, violators no longer come to officers'

homes to pay fines, rehabilitators raise injured and orphaned wildlife, and the family is no longer as deeply involved with the officer's job.

I have received many awards over the years. After 25 years of service, all WCOs receive the Wildlife Conservation Award from the Game Commission. I truly believe the award should actually be presented to each spouse of a WCO.

Now, while the Lone Ranger had Tonto, Batman had Robin, Roy Rogers had Gabby Hayes, etc., my sidekick has been Mary Alice. She has helped me with my career more than she will ever know. Although there's no official award for officers' wives, I want Mary Alice to know that her work behind the badge has been greatly appreciated. □

*If you look behind
the WCO badges,
you're going to find
spouses who have
worked behind the
scenes, who have
made the Game
Commission what
it is today.*



Bob Crain

The Shoshone Native Americans in Wyoming imitate the strutting of the wild turkey in one of their sacred dances. And imitation, some say, is the purest form of admiration. If anyone wonders why their respect for the wild turkey is so deep, try hunting them.

Ritual of the Heart

By Joe Parry

IF THERE IS anything in the realm of outdoor pursuits more exciting than calling in an amorous gobbler, I've yet — in 50 years of hunting — to learn what it is. And for those of us who so gratefully and joyously indulge, waiting for the spring season to arrive can be extremely difficult. Spring is the time of rebirth for everything wild, everything free, everything necessary for man's sanity and his natural, deeply imbedded, heartfelt need to share the magic that is wilderness. That is wild turkey hunting.

Having suffered yet another heart attack, my hunting was severely limited through the 1999 deer season. But, this setback would soon end. I gave it much thought over a long winter at the fly tying vise, while looking through an ice-covered pane of glass to the woods across from the old house. If I was going to buy the proverbial "farm," I would buy it while hunting whitetails or turkeys on the ridges and in the hollows of Tioga County.

Up until the spring of 2000, or since my first heart attack in '96, I was afraid of everything, from climbing a hillside, dragging deer, the sheer excitement I continue to feel while hunting, the long walks into "my" Endless Mountains, alone, with just a vile of nitro-glycerin pills, had me terrified. I thought it over countless times and

came to this conclusion: God intended that I be a hunter, an outdoor writer, a man who loves wilderness. And if He has my script already written, as they say, there's no sense worrying about where or when I'll die — as long as it's with a gun in my hands, a smile on my face, and a wild song in my heart. I will hunt spring gobblers when the season opens, and I'll hunt until my heart is either full or quits.

I spent many winter nights thinking about spring. In 1986 I grew to love spring gobbler hunting even more than autumn whitetails. My dear friend, Jim Bashline, now deceased, triggered my interest, and I began to read volumes on the subject. The first book written by one Roger Latham. Other friends then took over the fire that burned in my heart. Former PGC biologist Arnie Hayden, and a dear friend to this day, Tommy Bowen of Wellsboro, who is one of the best turkey hunters I know, showed me a lot of tricks. It wasn't long before I was hooked on hunting these magical birds.

There are more turkeys in Pennsylvania than ever before, and their habits seem somehow more "casual" than they were years ago. They'll feed

boldly, but ever so cautiously, in the grasshopper fields at the oddest hours of the day. They seem to begin their gobbling earlier here in the northern tier, with regard to the time of the mating season. And they have become somehow more wary, even as their numbers increase and their habits seem more brazen.

I would then be out there in the spring to hunt them once again, not caring how foolish they may make me feel after a winter of rusty hunting prowess. And foolish I would indeed feel on the first day of the second week of the season.

It was the proverbial bluebird day, and I'd not heard any birds on our mountain for a couple of weeks. I walked along a wide, grassy, irrigation ditch that wound its way around the southern base of the mountain I planned to hunt.

The ditch was reminiscent of a grassed-over high school running track. Dappling chords of spring sunlight illuminated the radiant buds of dogwoods and other trees. It was a grand time to be out and about. I could see just inside the woods as I made my way ever so slowly around the mountain's base, contemplating where to set up for the morning. Willows bordering the hardwood mountain were tinted yellow-green, promising the awakening of all things wild. I was happy just to be alive, and alone, in what has become my personal sanctuary over the past decade.

A soft *purrrrr, purrrrr, yelp, yelp*, on an old Smith box call brought a hoarse gobble from what sounded like a large, old tom. And there I was, out in the

open with no where to run, no where to hide, no time for anything but hitting the dirt. I got down as though hit on the head with a sledgehammer, pulled my facenet down and readied my old Italian double-barreled 12-gauge.

The gobbler sounded some 500 yards away, I figured, but as experienced turkey hunters know, figuring out the big birds is, at best, a hit and miss proposition. The only thing certain about turkey hunting is that they'll make fools of even the most seasoned veterans.

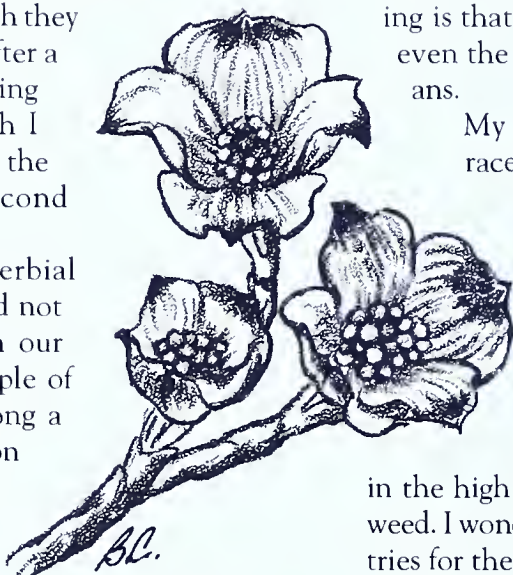
My heart, weak as it is, raced wildly with excitement. I yelped once more, this time without an answer, but in about a minute, perhaps two, I noticed two sky-blue heads bobbing up and down

in the high goldenrod and milkweed. I wondered if they were sentries for the huge tom I could see just inside the dappled woods beyond. All puffed up and fanned out, he looked like a heavily feathered

Volkswagen bug.

The two gobblers, which I figured were jakes, turned out to be mature birds, and they came in close, but I waited for the big boy, still strutting at the edge of the woods. But then something, I think the glint off my blued barrels, spooked them, and they were gone like wind-blown clouds, taking the dominant bird with them. I was mad about the missed opportunity, but an idea flashed through my mind quicker than those three birds had vacated the area.

My seemingly frivolous, perhaps foolish, plan was to outrun the spooked birds to a spot on the other side of the mountain where I figured they were headed. There were some beech trees on a little bench on the other side where I knew turkeys liked to hang out. I would test my turkey hunt-



DOGWOOD BUDS

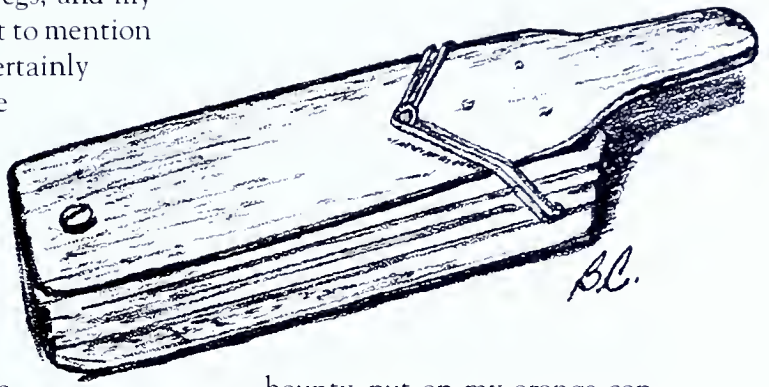
ing prowess, my 57-year-old legs, and my damaged heart to the max, not to mention my smarts as a hunter who certainly isn't an expert at anything, save making a fool of himself. But, to my heart and mind, the risk was well worth the effort. If the exertion killed me, I'd have died doing what I love more than anything else: I would give almost anything at any time to watch a wild turkey come strutting in to my calling.

Making my way through the many tree-tops downed by a recent logging operation, I found my "Methusalah oak," an ancient tree some 19 feet around at the base. There I got set up and ready to call, if indeed I'd beaten the birds to this side of the mountain. As I chalked up my old box call, I noticed a turkey jumping up then off a tree stump. I had the old double on my lap and my facenet down, ready to call, should I need to turn the birds toward me. They were out about 75 yards and to my left, heading in a direction that would bring them right in front of me, but too far out for a killing shot.

My knees trembled, my stomach rolled, and I thought about how I would get my gun up without them spotting me. The birds walked behind a downed tree, however, giving me the precious few seconds I needed to get the stock to my shaking shoulder. One soft yelp turned the two smaller toms on a dime, but the dominant gobbler only stretched his neck to see what the two other birds were getting into now. He maintained his 75-yard distance, heading east when I needed him to come south.

I put the bright bead of my shotgun between the snood and the dewlap of the lead and larger of the two birds that were coming in. The nickel-plated 4s dropped the bird in its tracks. I never saw the dominant tom leave, but turkeys are incredibly fast at that escape routine.

I tagged the bird, thanked God for the



bounty, put on my orange cap, tied the bird's legs together with a piece of rawhide and began the long walk to the barn. Along the way, my socks and shirttails went down and out, respectively, making the walk uncomfortable, so I stopped to adjust both and was partly undressed when another hunter, who I soon recognized as a neighbor, came out of the thick brush.

"Morning, Joe, nice bird ya got there. Just call him in?"

"Yeah, 'bout a half hour ago. Still two legal birds in there if you care to hunt 'em up, I'll point you in the right direction. One hefty, ol' tom, probably more than 20 pounds, I'd say."

"Naw, I've seen about all I want to see this mornin'. Figure I'll head to the house and get out again tomorrow."

I wondered what he meant by "seeing all he wanted to see this morning." He always was a dry humor sort of guy, sarcastic at times, too.

I continued my walk home, thanking God along the way for a safe, successful hunt, although I rarely measure success in terms of what I happen to kill. My heart was full, as the ritual was done in perfect spirit. I felt good. Better than ever, in fact, which was uncommon since my last heart attack. As I passed a cemetery along the road to home, a friend, Jeff Flannery, the caretaker of the place, saw me toting the gobbler.

"Hey, Joe, way to go! I didn't think

you'd even go up on the mountain this year, with the way your heart has been acting up. How much do you think he weighs?" he asked as he stroked the turkey's beard and smoothed the bronze back feathers.

"Well, Jeff, as far as my heart is concerned, it would likely stop if I couldn't hunt spring gobblers. Nothing in God's green earth fills it up more, or makes it feel new again, like talking to wild turkeys. And as for the weight of this blue-headed critter, when I shot him, I guessed he weighed 16 pounds. After the long walk off the mountain, though, I figure him to be upwards of 100."

I walked the remaining 300 yards to the old homestead, hung the bird from the clothesline pole for the plucking chore, and then went into the house for a glass of lemonade. My wife, Linda, was nuking some tea in the microwave when I said, "If anyone calls, I'll be outside cleaning my turkey."

Surprised because I hadn't killed

one in a while, she exclaimed, "You mean you shot one this year! I thought you weren't going to shoot anything again, after your last heart attack."

"Well, Sweetheart, I cannot for the life of me think of any other way to get them home except by shooting them and, even

if I could, I sure wouldn't want to put a turkey in the oven if it was still alive." This brought her hands to her hips.

I smiled, tossed the turkey beard onto the kitchen table and headed for the door. Linda stopped me when she said, "Joey, you ought to take that beard, put some glue on it, and place it neatly on

that bald spot on the back of your head." I just looked into her eyes with a formidable glare and continued out the front door, thinking her idea might work, but I'd much rather pin it to a piece of pine board to admire and keep my adrenaline running through the dismal days of winter, when rituals of the hunt and the heart are merely memories. Memories that sustain and strengthen even the weakest hearts, filling them to where the joys of past hunts last a lifetime — maybe longer. □

The ritual, or the hunt, is not nearly as important as the spirit in which it is done, and done by following the messages of the heart.

COVER PAINTING BY LAURA MARK-FINBERG

THE GAME COMMISSION is pleased to offer "Silent Hunter" featured on this month's cover. The bobcat crouched on the rock ledge is ready to pounce on some unsuspecting quarry. The big cat prefers to hunt by seeking out a vantage point, where it hides and then drops on its prey. It also stalks its victim, like a house cat, rushing it when within good striking distance. Snowshoe hares, cottontail rabbits, grouse, turkeys, small birds, fish and frogs are species bobcats commonly prey on.

Limited to 950 signed and numbered prints, image is about 16x20 inches; prints are \$125, plus \$10.95 s&h. Framed prints cost an additional \$97.50, plus \$14.95 s&h. PA residents must add 6 percent sales tax. Make checks payable to the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Order from the PA Game Commission, Dept. MS, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Check out "The Outdoor Shop" on our web site at www.pgc.state.pa.us for other items the PGC offers.

Pymatuning Wildlife Learning Center

By Don Feigert

WITH THE ARRIVAL of spring each year comes the re-opening of the Game Commission's Pymatuning Wildlife Learning Center. The center is near Linesville in Crawford County, located on Ford Island, a lush hundred acres surrounded by reservoir waters and waterfowl propagation and hunting areas. It's just north of the famous Linesville Spillway, where tourists toss stale bread to schools of huge, hungry carp and watch the ducks walk on the backs of the fish.

Last year the big news was a name change and a new focus on interactive instruction. This year new exhibits and new indoor and outdoor activities are planned.

My first impressions when I visited the center were of green, grassy meadows and a dark brown building on a hill, providing a magnificent view of Pymatuning Lake. Inside, I found the facility to be part museum and part activity center. Everywhere were wildlife taxidermy displays, especially of ducks, geese and other waterfowl, but

also of bobcats, beavers and even two full-bodied whitetail bucks, their antlers locked in battle.

Terry McClelland, administrator of the center, greeted me and smiled. Terry devoted 30 years to the outdoors as a deputy wildlife conservation officer, at the same time teaching in the Grove City School District, before he accepted his current position in 1998.

"You should have been here for the open house last May," Terry told me. "We officially announced our new name and our new program changes."

Until May 2000, the facility was called the Pymatuning Visitors Center, and before that, going all the way back to 1938, the Pymatuning Waterfowl Museum.

"When this place was called a visitors center," Terry said, "we received a hundred calls per month for Crawford County tourist information. That was distracting at best, but now the new name better fits what we are: a wildlife learning center. We're more than just a museum or a visitors center. I'm hoping this place will become a model for other facilities across the state."

THE MAIN ACTIVITIES building at the Pymatuning Wildlife Learning Center. Until May 2000, the facility was called the Pymatuning Visitors Center.



Terry gave me a tour and talked about the variety of features at the center: the wildlife exhibits, with more than 300 mounted mammal and bird species, the interactive learning stations, with wildlife identification charts, songbird audios, a tree identification trail, birdfeeders and bird watching gardens, and more. The facility also features a quarter-mile self-guided handicapped-accessible nature trail, bluebird houses, a purple martin colony, bald eagle viewing, a photography blind, and lecture and slide programs by wildlife specialists.

Last year, special Saturday programs included features on bears, birds of prey, attracting backyard wildlife, the history of Pymatuning Lake and more. I spoke to Regis Senko, PGC Information and Education Supervisor for the Northwest Region, and asked what's planned for this year.

"The Saturday programs will be different this year," Senko said. "We're going to de-emphasize the formal lecture programs in favor of more participation type hands-on exhibits that the public can enjoy all day long. It's a better, more efficient use of available space, and more fun for visitors."

I asked Regis what other changes and additions to the center we can expect this year.

"Well," he said, "the last few years the emphasis has been on changing the dynamics of the interior of the center, from a static display museum to a more current interactive learning center, and we're happy with the results. So now we're looking to expand horizons on the exterior, to improve



A RAIN SHELTER near the entrance to the quarter-mile self-guided nature trail. The trail is a well kept and much used path through dense brush and woods along the lake, where wooden mini-pavilions overlook waterfowl waters.

the educational potential of the grounds at the facility."

One such project is a colorful outdoor information board, so visitors can learn about and identify wildlife and wildlife habitat and other exterior features at the center grounds, even after hours.

"With Terry McClelland as administrator, you can expect ongoing changes, updates and improvements," said Regis, who hired Terry for the position more than four years ago. "We're fortunate to have Terry at the Pymatuning Center. He brings a unique perspective to the position, with his teaching experience and ability to educate, and also his years as a deputy. He has a long history with the Game Commission."

Regis supervises the Pymatuning Center, but Terry runs the daily operations. He often brings ideas to Regis for discussion and approval.

"To Terry's credit as an administrator," said Regis, "he creates an environment that's fertile for new ideas. He takes the ideas of the staff working there, brainstorms with them, and then figures out a way to implement the best suggestions."

Terry's primary responsibility, however,

is to manage the center's daily activity, which is considerable. "In May we have 200 to 300 student visitors each day," Terry told me during our tour. In the summer we have about 300 walk-in visitors and tourists on weekdays, and nearly 600 a day on weekends. We're trying to provide the opportunity for our visitors to learn about Pennsylvania wildlife, and also about the Game Commission and

the role it has played for more than 100 years in protecting and managing wildlife. We work hard to educate thousands of people, especially young people."

Under Terry's guidance, the center constantly replaces older activities and displays with new ones on different topics. Tourists can

make return visits and always find something new to look at and learn about.

A major new feature is the Hunting Heritage Room, which was funded by two local chapters of the National Wild Turkey Federation. The room is a replica of an early hunting and trapping cabin, with an antique 4-post bed and old tools, guns and photographs, and yet it also features a modern video center with tapes on outdoor and historical subjects.

Terry is really pleased with how visitors have taken to the new interactive learning stations. "People are coming here and spending time," he said. "The enthusiasm and the interest are greater than I expected."

This remarkable facility requires much time, effort and funding, of course, to continue its excellent public service. That's where the Game Commission comes in. The PGC leases the land and owns the building. For decades deputy WCOs have staffed the center.

"It's a free-of-charge Game Commission facility open to the public," Terry said. "A

major purpose for this place, though, is to be a place where people can learn what our agency does. We're not just out there arresting poachers and stocking pheasants. We're about a lot more than that. We manage all wildlife, from the hummingbird to the eagle, from the chipmunk to the elk. And we manage wildlife for the benefit of all Pennsylvanians, not just hunters."

"We manage all wildlife, from the hummingbird to the eagle, from the chipmunk to the elk for the benefit of all Pennsylvanians, not just hunters."

I shook hands with Terry after our tour and interview, and then stepped outside to enjoy the spectacular view of the wetlands and waters. I walked past the purple martin colony station and the instructional amphitheater to the

eagle shelter and the beginning of the quarter-mile nature trail.

The trail is a well kept and much used path through dense brush and woods along the lake, where wooden mini-pavilions overlook waterfowl waters. Markers guided me past tall black cherry trees and majestic white oaks, dense barberry shrubs, quaking aspens, dogwood, blackberry bushes and staghorn sumac, to the point where the trail ends and the parking lot begins. My day at the center was over then, but I'll be back.

The Pymatuning Wildlife Learning Center is open five to six days per week depending on the season, from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m., April through September, but the outdoor facilities are available even when the buildings are closed.

For more information, contact Terry McClelland, Administrator, Pymatuning Wildlife Learning Center, 12590 Hartstown Road, Linesville, PA 16424, phone: 814-683-5545. □

A Special Turkey Feather

By Carl L. Loeffler, Jr.

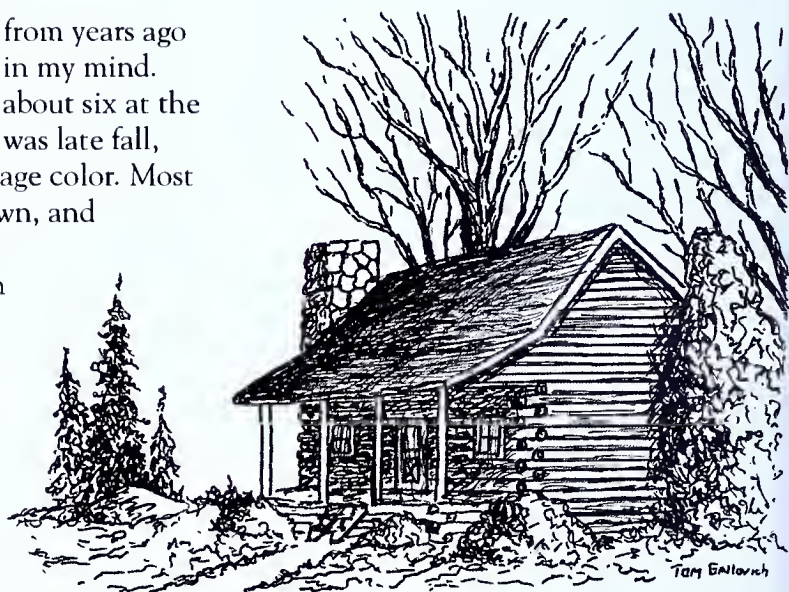
I LOVE everything associated with hunting camp, from planning a trip to packing the car, and even the ride home after a weekend of pure enjoyment. At camp, the food seems to taste better and the fire in the fireplace seems to burn a little hotter. The relaxation and peace I enjoy at camp cannot be equaled anywhere else.

The ride to camp has become an almost religious experience for me. I have seen almost every type of wildlife Pennsylvania has to offer on these rides, and I'm nearly always surprised. Most of these rides have taken place on the Caledonia Pike in Elk and Clearfield counties, up the hill from Caledonia, across the ridge tops to Billotte Road and then Buck Run Road to camp. These rides have offered some of my most cherished memories.

One of these rides from years ago still sticks out clearly in my mind. My son Jeff, who was about six at the time, was with me. It was late fall, just past the peak foliage color. Most of the leaves were down, and with the increased visibility, we had high expectations for seeing a lot of deer. We always left about an hour and a half before dark to maximize our chances of seeing deer as they begin

to move at twilight. This puts us at camp just when it gets dark.

On our rides we made a game out of seeing who could spot the most deer first. For awhile I always won. With his untrained eye, Jeff had trouble spotting them. He insisted I saw more because most were on my side of the road. Then one particular evening we went straight up the hill in Caledonia to the Pike. We were playing our game — and I was winning — when I noticed a turkey feather lying on the road near the Medix Grade Road intersection. I stopped the truck and backed up so my son could see it. Well, he wanted that feather. He jumped out and ran to the front of the truck to pick it up. As he stood up his mouth dropped wide open, his eyes got as big as baseballs, and he pointed to my side of the road.



There, not 30 yards away, stood a huge 8-point and four does. They were just standing there watching us. I think this was the first time Jeff had seen a large buck that close and he couldn't have been more excited. As the deer ran off, Jeff climbed back into the truck and proclaimed that this turkey feather was our lucky feather.

I thought no more about the incident until a month later, on Thanksgiving night. I had all my hunting gear together and was taking one last check of the inventory when I noticed a turkey feather sticking out of my hunting coat pocket.

When I asked my wife where it had come from she said, "Ask your son." When I approached Jeff about the feather he said he wanted me to have it because it was our lucky feather. He said I should put it in my truck because I always took the truck hunting, and that way it would always be with me. I was amazed that he had saved the feather. I took Jeff out to the truck, and after we had all the gear loaded I told him to put it over the sun visor, so it would be close to me. I've carried that feather with me

ever since.

My son is now grown and living in Wyoming, and hunts and fishes there. I often think of him and how I miss him when I make the trip to camp by myself.

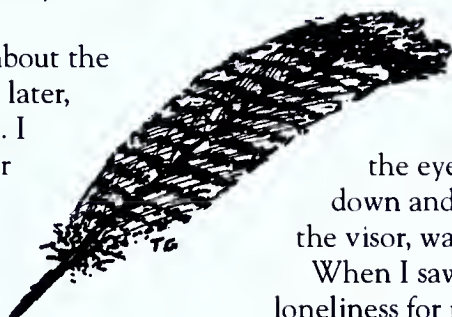
One day while on my way to work

I was thinking of what I needed to do that day, and when I topped a rise, the sun hit me in

the eyes. I pulled the visor down and there, in the back of the visor, was the turkey feather.

When I saw it, I felt the sting of loneliness for my son. The memories of that fall evening so many years ago came rushing back. I could still see a little boy standing in front of the truck, pointing at a huge buck. I deeply miss that little boy and the time I spent with him on the rides to camp. Seeing the feather was a reality check for me. Where I was and where I would like to be.

I never made it to work that day. At the light I turned right instead of left, toward camp and a much needed escape from reality that had become my life. Oh, how I love that turkey feather. □



Books in Brief

(Not available from the Game Commission.)

Out Back — Reflections From the Appalachian Outdoors, by Ben Moyer (A contributor to "Crossings," on page 64.), order from Raven Rock Books, P.O. Box 223, Farmington, PA 15437, 132 pp., paperback, \$19, which includes shipping & handling. Outdoors columnist and feature writer for the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, and former editor of *Pennsylvania Sportsman* magazine, Ben Moyer's award-winning writing on the outdoor experience and on fish and wildlife conservation issues has appeared in many state, regional and national publications. *Out Back* is a collection of philosophical musings written as the back page essay for five years in *Pennsylvania Sportsman*. In addition to the entertaining prose, the book is skillfully illustrated by well known wildlife artist Bob Sopchick.

The bluebird carries the sky on his back.

— Henry David Thoreau, Journal, April 3, 1852

Neighorly Solutions

By Larissa Rose

PGC Information Writer

Photos by Dick Brown

Middle Creek Volunteer Coordinator

OVER THE PAST 150 years, changes in Pennsylvania's landscape (and throughout eastern North America) have caused the eastern bluebird population to rise and then fall. When early settlers cleared the land for agriculture, bluebirds — and other wild animals that thrive in open fields — prospered. In addition, being cavity nesters, bluebirds readily adapted to the nesting sites provided by fence posts and fruit trees.

But then, in the late 1800s, the introduction of house sparrows and star-

lings sent bluebird numbers down, as the more aggressive species drove bluebirds from their homes. This, combined with the widespread use of pesticides in the 1950s, which poisoned the insects bluebirds eat, and the return to more forested habitat throughout the state, caused bluebird numbers to decline.

By the 1970s, however, the technique of using artificial nest boxes had become well understood, and campaigns were underway throughout eastern North America to bring back this harbinger of spring.

All over Pennsylvania, bird lovers are taking steps to make sure the eastern bluebird continues to rebound. Some people put up a bluebird box, while others establish a trail with several, or even hundreds of boxes. Some join organizations, such as the Pennsylvania Bluebird Society, to team up with others who also wish to see the species flourish.

At Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area, volunteers have gone beyond putting up bluebird boxes. There, like many other areas, bluebirds and tree swallows compete for nest boxes and natu-



BLUEBIRD BOXES were placed in various arrangements, particularly in pairs, all over Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area, in an attempt to boost bluebird numbers in the area.

After using the much-popularized PVC pipe on posts as a predator guard, it was noted that a determined raccoon could easily climb the 30-inch pipes and eat the young birds. For the 2001 nesting season, the Noel predator guard was installed on about 60 boxes. The guard is a 6-by 24-inch piece of quarter-inch hardware cloth molded into the shape of a rectangle, a little smaller than the front of a bluebird box. The one edge is cut and bent back to provide an area for screwing this device to the front of the bird box.

The guard was designed by Jim Noel to keep raccoons out of bird boxes. It worked well, but there was one raccoon that was so heavy it smashed the guards just by sitting on them, and in one instance, the critter was able to reach the fledglings inside the smashed box. Unfortunately, the raccoons left the guarded boxes and moved to other areas where the birds were not protected, so in 2002 the predator guards, which both bluebirds and tree swallows readily adapted to, will be put on more of the nest boxes.



ral cavities. In an attempt to minimize or eliminate this competition, volunteers have spent the past four nesting seasons trying to come up with an arrangement of boxes that would allow the two species to coexist or, more specifically, increase bluebird nest success.

The Middle Creek Bluebird Project began in 1998, with retired science teacher Dick Brown coordinating the endeavor. Brown and several other volunteers experimented with different box arrangements to determine how the two species would react to various configurations. Since it has long been known that tree swallows are more tolerant of bluebirds than of each other, the boxes were arranged in pairs to see just how tolerant the two species could be.

In 2001, 226 boxes were arranged in pairs, looking at factors such as distances between boxes, from right up against one another to 25 feet apart; and how boxes were positioned in relation to one another, facing the same or opposite directions.

In addition to the paired boxes, 10 were placed in the traditional bluebird trail ar-

rangement with single boxes at least 300 feet apart, to reflect territorial needs. At one location, eleven boxes were arranged in a loose cluster, with single boxes placed from 15 to 80 feet apart and scattered over an area about 300 feet across.

In February and March each year, volunteers clean out and prepare boxes for the upcoming nesting season. At the end of March, they attend a training session to learn how to identify signs of predation and complete the paperwork necessary to monitor nest box use. Beginning April 1, volunteers monitor the boxes, noting nest material and number of eggs or young, as well as any other interesting sights, such as egg color or blowfly evidence. Boxes are checked weekly until August 1.

Over the four years, the number of boxes monitored has increased from 177 to 251. Along with the number of boxes, the number of nesting bluebirds has also increased. In 1998, 25 pairs had 30 successful nest attempts,



IN 2001, 96 boxes were placed in 48 side-by-side pairs that faced the same direction between one and 25 feet apart. Sixteen boxes were placed in eight side-by-side pairs facing opposite directions between one and 15 feet apart.

from which 97 chicks fledged. In 2001, the number of nesting pairs was 46, more than doubling the nesting attempts and fledglings to, respectively, 62 and 240.

The number of tree swallows nesting at Middle Creek has remained steady, at about 100 pairs per season. The increase in fledglings from 250 to 382 is mostly related to the control of predators. No predator guards were used to reduce raccoon predation.

House sparrows — common swallow and bluebird competitors — have become less of a problem over the four years. During the first year, boxes that had been frequently used by house sparrows were removed, and while the nest boxes were being monitored, adult sparrows were trapped and nests were destroyed. Seeing bluebird numbers continue to rise while tree swal-

low numbers remain about the same shows how effective placing boxes in pairs can be.

This continuing experiment has yielded several interesting observations about the relationship between bluebirds and tree swallows, as well as the individual species' characteristics. For example, the fact that tree swallows are more tolerant of bluebirds than they are of each other has been reinforced by learning that the two species will nest as close to each other as one-foot (in side-by-side boxes), but two pairs of tree swallows will not nest in both boxes if they're less than 10 feet apart, unless the openings face in opposite directions, then they'll nest as close as 7 feet.

At back-to-back sites, bluebirds and swallows may nest at the same time, but two pairs of swallows usually will not, unless there is lag time between nesting dates.



AT NINE SITES, boxes were placed one above the other, with both facing in the same direction. At two sites, the stacked boxes faced in opposite directions.

At all of the paired sites, no matter what the species, the least amount of friction occurs if there is about a two week gap between the start of the two nests, so while one pair is preoccupied with raising young, the other pair can build a nest.

While there hasn't appeared to be one best arrangement, it has been learned that by putting up boxes in pairs, tree swallow competition can be greatly reduced and, in turn, bluebird nesting success can be increased. When it's all said and done, the site or area probably dictates which box spacing and arrangements are best.

The information obtained from the Middle Creek Bluebird Project has been and will continue to be helpful to all bluebird enthusiasts. The study will continue into the 2002 nesting season.

The goal of the study continues to be to increase the number of bluebirds at Middle Creek to a point where it is about the same as the number of tree swallows. So far, this effort seems to be on track. At the end of the 1998 nesting season, the ratio of bluebirds to tree swallows was 1:3.0.



NINETY-TWO boxes were placed in 46 back-to-back pairs, with two on each steel post at the same height, facing in opposite directions.

With a significant increase in the number of bluebirds, it has improved to 1:1.8, proving that the methods are working.

A complete report for 2001 can be obtained by contacting the Middle Creek office at 717-733-1512. The address is Box 110, Kleinfeltersville, PA 17039. The 2000 report was published in the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania's Fall 2001 issue of *Bluebird Trails and Tales*, the society's quarterly newsletter. □

Some unusual sights have been witnessed during the project. For example, during the 1998, 2000 and 2001 nesting seasons, the weather was cold and wet in the spring, which was followed by normal summer weather. During those three years, the bluebirds followed their usual pattern of nesting twice. In 1999, however, it was a warm spring followed by a very hot, dry summer. During that nesting season, three different pairs had three successful nesting attempts, with the third clutches still in the boxes at the end of August and into early September. The number of nesting attempts by bluebirds is clearly related to the weather conditions at the beginning of the nesting season.

The tree swallows, on the other hand, generally nest only once a season. However, in 2001, eight pairs made a second nesting attempt after the first clutch had fledged successfully. Of those eight, four were successful, with chicks still in the box on or about August 1.

A particularly interesting event demonstrating abnormal bluebird behavior occurred in 1998, when a male bluebird apparently killed a swallow that had invaded its nest box. The female bluebird wove the carcass of the swallow into the nest and laid four eggs on it. Later, after the chicks had fledged and before a second clutch was started, another swallow was killed in the same box.

THE GERMAN'S HOUSE sat farther back than the other houses on our street, tucked up against the woods like a concrete bunker. His immaculate yard was enclosed by a chain link fence, and was patrolled by Max, a vicious German shepherd. Whenever James, Billy and I walked by we always gave a wide berth to the snarling Max who followed us along the fenceline.

The house belonged to a man named Niklas Bauer, but everyone called him the German. Bauer had been a German machine-gunner in World War I. Sometimes at night we saw the light burning in the shop window above his garage, and we created scenarios that he was sending secret radio messages to the fatherland while the neighborhood slept.

One summer day, James was demonstrating a new handtrap by tossing claybirds from my backyard into a hillside out back. Billy, on his turn, disregarded our instructions and sent a claybird rocketing across several yards, and we watched in horror as its long, slow-motion descent sailed through the German's open shop window. A split-second later the red-faced German appeared in the window, shaking his fist, unleashing a tirade of Old World oaths. From then on he kept a close eye on us.

Come September, the trio of pear trees in the German's yard drooped with the burden of luscious golden fruit. The trees were expertly pruned and the trunks white-washed partway up, as was the practice back then. After hiking up the hill from school our mouths watered at the sight of the succulent pears. But with Max always on patrol, we dared not reach in to pick up a pear, nor did we have the courage to ask the grumpy German if we might have one.

James, like the biblical Adam, became obsessed with tasting the forbidden fruit. Studying the trees through binoculars, he devised a foolproof plan that would not — subject to interpretation — incur the wrath of God or the German.

"I still think it's stealing," said Billy.

"No it isn't," insisted James. "Stealing is if he owned a store and you took some of his pears. This is harvesting. When you pick fruit from a tree, it's harvesting, and you're gonna be the harvester, Billy. Besides, you won't be setting one foot on his lawn."

The plan was simple. James and I would play catch on the sidewalk out front, diverting the attention of Max. Meanwhile, Billy would climb the big oak out back and shimmy out onto a branch that overhung the German's shop. When the German walked into the front yard to see what the commotion was all about, Billy would drop down onto the workshop roof, walk the length of it, fill his rucksack with pears from the branches near the roof, and then be gone before the German returned.

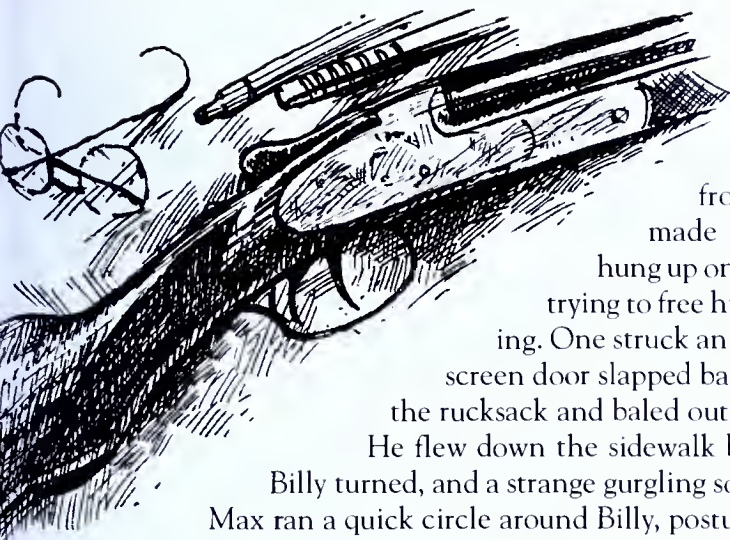
All went precisely as planned until Billy was overcome with bravado. He needed only a few more pears to fill the rucksack and decided to climb out from the roof into the pear tree. The German picked up his newspaper from the sidewalk, eyeballing us suspiciously, then with Max heeled, he walked back to the house, underneath Billy who signaled us from his perch.

Billy waited for them to enter the house, then in a bold move,

The Golden Pear

Penn's Wood's Sketchbook/Bob Sopchick





began climbing down the pear tree, intent on marching right out the German's front gate. And he would have made it, too, had not the rucksack hung up on a branch. Billy thrashed about, trying to free himself, and ripe pears began falling. One struck an aluminum awning, and when a screen door slapped back in place, Billy slipped out of the rucksack and baled out of the tree.

He flew down the sidewalk but Max was on him instantly.

Billy turned, and a strange gurgling sound emanated from his throat.

Max ran a quick circle around Billy, postured before him, with front legs splayed and rear end raised, tail wagging wildly. A white grin beamed in his fiendish black face. Max wanted to play.

The German clamped one of his huge machine-gunnery hands around Billy's wrist, and they marched down the sidewalk. The German froze us in our tracks with an icy Teutonic stare, then without saying a word, released the sobbing prisoner.

The next day we found the rucksack hanging on the gate. Inside were three pears. James and Billy refused to eat the fruit, convinced that it was poisoned. I cut one apart and examined it, then slowly ate a thin slice. Assured that I would live, they ate the pears like starving waifs. Although we agreed that the pears were the sweetest, juiciest pears ever, they were actually quite ordinary. From then on we steered clear of the German, and he looked upon us with a glint of amusement in his steely gray eyes.

NOT LONG AFTER, we were shooting our .22 rifles at the local range and Billy's gun wouldn't fire. He unloaded it and then removed and started fidgeting with the bolt when a large shadow loomed over the bench. It was the German.

"Let me see da gun," he said.

Billy handed him the rifle.

Bauer examined it; looked it all over and frowned. "When's da last time it was cleaned?"

"A while ago," said Billy. "I cleaned the barrel with a coat hanger."

"Colt hanker," repeated the German with some disdain. Come mitt me."

We followed the German back to his shop. A rack of guns bearing tags ran the length of a wall. The neat shop was well equipped with a drill press, a lathe and a band saw. A small forge sat in a corner and next to it a German army helmet filled with kindling. Handmade turnscrews and chisels bordered a long bench, and a beautiful riflestock carved in high relief with oak leaves and acorns nestled in a cradle.

"I learnt gun vork when I was a young man in Oberndorf, but den come da war. After da war I come to America and vork in mill, but always still fix guns little bit here and dere. Now I'm on pension, I vork on dem all da time," he said.

In short order he had our guns completely disassembled, and showed us how to give them a proper cleaning. He made some adjustments, oiled the parts sparingly, then directed each of us on the reassembly.

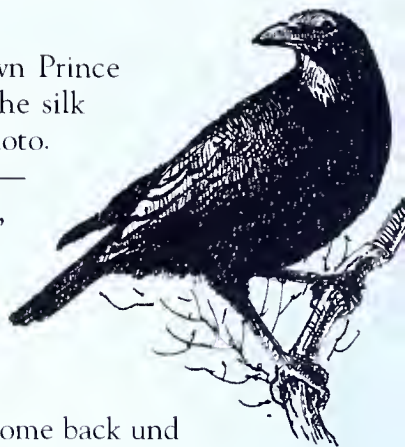
Bauer showed us a gun he had made in Germany. It was a drilling, with two shotgun barrels above a rifle barrel. It had folding leaf sights and was ornately engraved with Baroque hunting scenes of wild boars and roe deer running through a forest.

Hanging above the bench were two framed sepia-toned photographs. In one, Bauer

beamed proudly, wearing the Iron Cross that the Crown Prince himself had pinned on him. The medal was set into the silk mat below the photo. The other was a formal salon photo. Bauer stood next to a fair-haired girl seated at a table — his wife Frieda. They moved to Pennsylvania in 1924, and Frieda had passed on soon after.

“What about this gun?” asked James. He pointed out a pewtery double-barrel shotgun with a broken stock in the rack. “Can you fix this gun? It looks pretty bad.”

“I can fix,” said Bauer. “Maybe you boys help, too. Come back und I show you.”



UNDER BAUER'S STRICT SUPERVISION we cut his lawn and trimmed his shrubs and whitewashed his house. James helped prune his trees, and Billy walked Max every evening. We picked vegetables and pears for him, and helped Bauer can them. In exchange for our help, he took us through the stages of restoring the shotgun.

It was a 20-gauge L.C. Smith lightweight field grade with good bores, and the action was still on face. Restocking a Smith is difficult, but Bauer soon had a handsome piece of figured walnut installed, or “headed up” to the action, then laid out the stock for shaping. It would have a half pistol grip and splinter forend, with 22 lines-per-inch checkering. There would be no engraving, but after polishing the metal Bauer case-hardened the action using a series of hardening boxes and charred bone. When he was done, color swirled on the sideplates like prisms of oil on water. He also worked his magic on the barrels, charcoal bluing them to a deep, lustrous blue-black.

Like a wizard instructing his apprentices in the arts of alchemy, Bauer showed us how to create a breathtaking oil finish on the stock. To halt the penetration of oil into the wood he used a formula of alcanet root, raw linseed oil, spar varnish, turpentine and Venice turpentine. After the pores were sealed, we oiled the stock using red oil to impart a deep, reddish cast. Every day for a week one of us would stop by to apply a thin coat of oil with the palm of our hand. Bauer let the stock stand for several days, then applied another coat of raw oil. Several days later the oil had hardened and gummed over. Then, with a wad of rags, Bauer coated the stock with hard automobile cup grease, sprinkled some powdered pumice onto it and scoured off the hardened coat of oil, right down to the bare wood. He rubbed it then with his bare hands, and it glowed as if captive embers burned somewhere deep in the fathoms of grain.

The next time we saw the gun it was assembled and lay gleaming in an opened trunk case lined with green velvet. Bauer had inlaid a single gold pear on the bottom of the action, along with an oval nameplate in the belly of the stock engraved with our initials.

“This gun belongs to all of you, for your graduation coming up. Each vun will use it for three years, den give it to the next vun. Dis you will do for always, but at da end you must make sure it goes on to somevun after dat. Da guns, they can liff on, and part of you liffs in dem.”

“Who gets it first?” asked James.

“Well now, I got dat figured out.” said the German with a sly smile.

“I giff each of you 10 shells. Only short shells chamber in dis gun. New ones don't fit, so ders no cheating. Take da gun, one at a time, and see who brings back da most crows. Whoever is da best jager, the best hunter, gets da gun first.”

It was late winter, and there was an enormous roost of crows on the other side of the river. James hunted first, setting up near a dump. He put out an owl decoy and a spread of crow silhouettes, returning that evening with four birds. "I got five, but one fell in the river. I guess that don't count, though."

"Where I come from, four is not fife," said Bauer.

The next Saturday it was my turn. I had done some scouting and located a flyway where a steady stream of crows passed through on their way to roost. It was pass shooting plain and simple. I didn't bother to call or set out decoys, but sat well camouflaged in a hedgerow. I shot only the left barrel, choked a tight-modified, and brought down six birds.

Billy showed up late for his hunt, and was reluctant to go. He was a poor shot, and didn't do well at anything without our guidance. He was wearing a red sweatshirt with the hood tied tight around his face, and had an old, flat-sounding crow call dangling from one of the strings. He pocketed his ten shells and headed out into the lengthening shadows.

Billy returned at dark, half frozen. He plopped a bundle of crows onto the workbench — seven of them — their legs bound together with the string from his hood. It was nothing less than a miracle. He was a real wingshot, a true *jagermeister*. James and I were secretly proud of him.

Bauer disassembled the gun and we wiped it down and cleaned it. Billy's hands were still numb, and he dropped the stock. It smacked the edge of the stove, putting a crescent-shaped dent right through the checkering. Bauer tried to raise it with steam but it was too deep, and so it stayed.

JAMES WOULD NEVER USE the gun. His family moved to California right after we graduated, and we never heard from them again. Without James around, Billy and I fell out of touch. Once, when I was home from college, I bumped into him in front of his house. He was a soldier on leave, about to begin his second tour of duty in Southeast Asia. He was wearing a beret, and his overcoat sported sergeant stripes.

"Hey. I got something for you," he said. He brought the cased gun out onto the porch and handed it to me. "I never used it, and never will. I don't have any interest in hunting."

"I bet you guys always wondered how I got those crows. Well, I took the railroad bridge across the river and hid inside an old sycamore trunk until just before quitting time. Hundreds of crows were settling down in that roost. I got four with one barrel, and three with the other. Two shots. I didn't understand until I got back that it was supposed to be a wingshooting thing. I just killed a bunch of birds the best way I knew how. Anyway, it's yours now."

SOMETIMES WHEN I COME upon a wild pear tree in the woods, I often flush a grouse nearby. They like to feed on the fallen, rotting fruit come late afternoon. When I approach the tree I nervously run a thumb-nail along the dent on the stock. At that moment I think of James and wonder where life had led him, what golden pears he had found. I think of the German, who shared his craft, who showed us how to do a thing well. But most of all, I think of Billy. Brave Billy in the pear tree, the runny-nosed kid with his stringer of crows. And I think of Billy, the soldier, who never returned, but lives on in this gun with the others. Just like the German said.



FIELD NOTES

Popular Season

UNION — Hunting pressure here on the first day of the October “doe” season seemed nearly as heavy as it was during the regular deer season.

— WCO BERNARD J. SCHMADER, MILLMONT



A Real Problem

FRANKLIN — Due to the extremely warm weather during deer season my deputies and I noticed parts of harvested deer discarded along some roads in our district, and we also received calls from several landowners about deer carcasses dumped on their property. The Game Commission does not condone any type of littering, as this irresponsible activity of a few makes all hunters look bad.

— WCO KEVIN L. MOUNTZ, ST. THOMAS

No Need to Worry

BUCKS — I got a call from a person wanting to know if the many dead squirrels sighted along a major highway were evidence of a biological agent released by terrorists.

— WCO WILLIAM F. DINGMAN III, FOUNTAINVILLE

It Happens Every Class

TRAINING SCHOOL — We were identifying characteristics of trees and shrubs during winter when one trainee had difficulty with a particular species, so he broke off a piece and smelled and tasted it. You guessed it: poison ivy.

— TRAINEE DAVID ALLEN, HARRISBURG

Wise Guy

SOMERSET — Deputy Louis Fisher arrived to assist me with a vehicle I had pulled over whose occupants had committed a spot-lighting violation. Suddenly, the operator of the vehicle told Deputy Fisher that his vehicle was drifting backwards down the road. I finished taking the needed information, while Louis chased after his vehicle. Later, I said to Louis, “What vehicles are we chasing tonight, theirs or ours?”

— WCO BRIAN E. WITHERITE, MEYERSDALE



Loss of Feeling

TRAINING SCHOOL — I didn’t realize that poison ivy looks like spicebush, but after a dendrology class I can’t even say if it tastes like spicebush; my lips were too swelled.

— TRAINEE RICHARD W. JOYCE, HARRISBURG

Good Prospects

TIOGA — Just after bear season I had three people tell me they saw a total of 16 bears, and I saw three myself. With the mild fall and winter, and the good acorn crop here, the bears didn't den as early as they usually do. Many were out and about, still putting on weight in December, which will make for some big bears next year.

— WCO ROBERT F. MINNICH, MANSFIELD

Not a Pretty Picture

Game lands maintenance supervisor Jim Snyder and I were on our way to a meeting when three deer darted out in the road, causing me to slam on the brakes, which sent a tray of cookies on the back seat smashing into the dashboard. Jim looked at me and said, "You tossed your cookies and we haven't even eaten any yet."

— LMO GEORGE J. MILLER, MARIENVILLE

Tough Luck

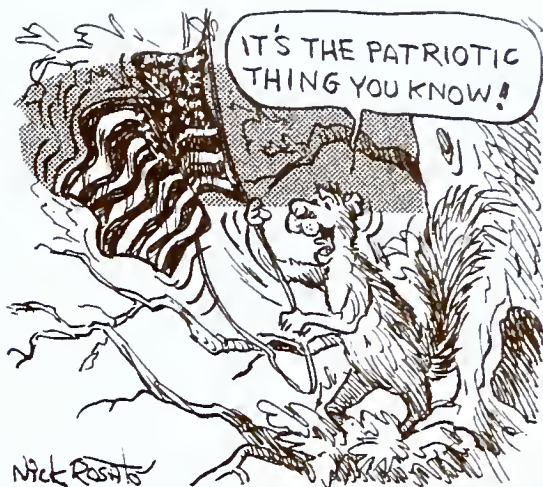
BERKS — A hunter told me that a relative of his had taken her 11th and 12th deer this fall, but before I could comment on her accomplishments, he said that all had been struck with her car. Deer number 12 was struck with a loaned vehicle while her other car was in the shop being repaired from deer number 11.

— WCO DAVID BROCKMEIER, MOHNTON

Good Timing

CLARION — Many times WCOs arrive at the scene of a violation too late to get the evidence needed to prosecute, but one day during deer season Deputy Gary Guntrum, dressed in hunting duds, was patrolling in his unmarked truck, when a hunter came out of the woods and asked him if he could give him and his brother, who had bagged a spike, a ride home. Gary agreed, but when the pair dragged the deer out of the woods, the spikes had shrunk to mere buttons, and since neither of the young men had an antlerless license, I can imagine the looks on their faces when Gary identified himself.

— WCO ALAN C. SCOTT, NEW BETHLEHEM



Patriotic Bushytail

CRAWFORD — Mrs. Lil Germaine placed some small U.S. flags in her yard for Veteran's Day, but was appalled to find them missing the next day. Curiously, though, the small sticks holding the flags remained in the ground. Fortunately, a neighbor had witnessed the thief as it made off with one of the flags. Although no arrest was made, the offender, a squirrel, was positively identified, as Old Glory waved from a leaf nest high in a tree.

— WCO MARK A. ALLEGRO, MEADVILLE

Extra Special

MERCER — During deer season I often help hunters remove deer from the field. It was especially rewarding this year to assist an 82-year-young hunter with the doe he took on the first day. Congratulations, Dad!

— DEPUTY TERRY L. MCCLELLAND, GROVE CITY

Three's a Charm

MONROE — While deer hunting this fall I was watching a grouse when I noticed movement out of the corner of my eye. Two bobcats had hunkered down and were watching the grouse, too. It was then that I noticed another bobcat quietly stalking from below. Unfortunately for the bobcats, the grouse flew off before they could pounce.

— WCO PETER F. SUSSENBACH, BLAKESLEE



Just Right

Jason Mitchell was bowhunting when a bear started up the tree he was in. He yelled at the bear, but it continued, so he threw his flashlight at it. The bear took the flashlight, chewed it up and then started up the tree again. Jason threw his can of snuff at the bear, which chewed that up, too, but then, seemingly satisfied, it wandered off. Jason's buddies are now calling him Goldilocks.

— LMO STEVEN BERNARDI, PENNS CREEK

So Close Yet So Far

VENANGO — On the first day of turkey season I noticed a flock of turkeys standing in a game lands parking area that had no vehicles in it. Down the road and within sight of the parking area, however, five vehicles were parked along the road.

— WCO LEONARD C. HRIBAR, OIL CITY

Popular

TRAINING SCHOOL — While on field training assignment with WCO Jeff Kendall in Lawrence County, I quickly learned that if I wanted to stop at a convenience store for coffee in the morning, I needed to start out an hour earlier. It seems that once someone spots the uniform they have plenty of questions. I really didn't mind answering the questions, though, as it's better to ask than get in the field and not know.

— TRAINEE BETH A. FIFE, HARRISBURG

Dedicated

DELAWARE — During deer season, Deputy Dan Nearey and I were checking a hunter when Dan noticed the hunter was wearing dress wing tip shoes. We then saw that underneath his fluorescent orange garb, the man was wearing a business suit. He said he was about to go to work for the day.

— WCO DARREN J. DAVID, ASTON

Chompin' at the Bit

SULLIVAN — Young prospective hunters who graduated from a Hunter-Trapper Education course at the North Mountain Sportsmen's Association Club were told they could legally start hunting when they reached 12 years of age. One anxious young man explained that he would turn 12 at exactly 10:39 a.m. on his next birthday. I explained to him that he would not have to wait until that exact time to start hunting.

— WCO WILLIAM WILLIAMS, MUNCY VALLEY

Serves 'Em Right

ADAMS — Lowell Grove became pretty upset with some beavers that flooded his fields and felled his black cherry trees, so when a couple of trappers, John and Dean Shull, asked if they could trap a few beavers, Lowell gave his blessing. "Those beavers don't pay rent, destroyed some of my fields, and didn't cut my firewood to the right length," he said.

— WCO LARRY D. HAYNES, GETTYSBURG

Insincere?

MERCER — After citing an individual for several violations, including attempting to take a second buck, he shook my hand and thanked me for catching him. He went on to say that I had made an honest man out of him, and even that he and I could be hunting buddies. I just can't help but think that I'll run into him again, though, and maybe even before he's off license revocation.

— WCO DONALD G. CHAYBIN, GREENVILLE

Rip Van Winkle

TRAINING SCHOOL — One night while I was on field assignment in Indiana County, five officers and I were dropped off to investigate a possible violation. The person assigned to drive found a quiet spot and awaited a radio call to pick us up. The spot was a bit too quiet, however, as our driver fell asleep and we had to walk the five miles back.

— TRAINEE GLEN CAMPBELL, HARRISBURG

Sudden Impact

SNYDER — After firing at some geese, several hunters were reloading when another hunter in the party shot a bird. One of the unsuspecting hunters who had been stuffing more shells in his shotgun was hit in the face by the falling goose, which broke his nose and caused him to tumble backwards off the embankment. I guess this gives new meaning to the phrase, "Keep your eye on the target."

— WCO HAROLD J. MALEHORN, MIDDLEBURG

What Do You Think?

BEDFORD — After being cited for shooting a piebald deer from a vehicle, the violator asked Deputy Tom Lewis if shooting a white deer brings bad luck. Over the last five years in my district my deputies and I have apprehended violators on three separate occasions for shooting all white (albino) or partly white (piebald) deer out of season.

— WCO DAN YAHNER, EVERETT

Who's Been Naughty and Nice?

McKEAN — I was visiting retired WCO Guy Waldman and his wife a few days before Christmas, when we went to see a neighbor dressed as Santa, who was handing out candy canes in front of his Christmas display in his yard. A young man there told Santa that he had shot a doe and tagged it with his dad's tag, so Santa told the fellow to tell that guy (Guy) over there all about it.

— WCO ROSE LUCIANE, CUSTER CITY

Learned a Lesson

FULTON — Trainee Jim McCarthy was assigned to the Southcentral Region Office to get some experience working with dispatchers, and I gave him detailed directions to the office so he would arrive on time. I did, however, forget to tell him which way to turn out of my driveway. Eleven miles later Jim was in Maryland, and if he had crossed the Potomac River he would have been in Virginia. I explained to him that having a good sense of direction is one of the greatest abilities a WCO can possess.

— WCO STEPHEN LEIENDECKER, NEEDMORE

Unusual

BRADFORD — George Wilcox from Canton told me that he had seen at least 13 different bears during the fall, with seven of them being the cinnamon phase.

— WCO WILLIAM A. BOWER, RETIRED, TROY



Valuable Lessons

JUNIATA — The warm weather during deer season encouraged many hunters to process their own deer. One hunter told me he learned three lessons by doing his own butchering. First, he now has a better understanding of shot placement. Second, he now realizes why he gets the amount of meat back that he usually does from the butcher. And, third, the value of a sharp knife and a box of Band-Aids.

— WCO DANIEL I. CLARK, HONEY GROVE

Strange Happenings

COLUMBIA — On December 29, with the temperature in the low teens, I assisted State Police with a roadkilled bear. Why the bear wasn't hibernating, I don't know. The next day I responded to a call about an injured deer and found a fawn that didn't weigh even 30 pounds. Now, as I write this Field Note on January 4, there's a flock of robins in my yard.

— WCO GEORGE A. WILCOX, MILLVILLE



Not That Way

Clarion County Food and Cover foreman Gary Maxwell shot a turkey from his treestand while archery hunting last November, but before he could get down to tag and retrieve the bird, a red fox ran in and grabbed it. This was the only time I have ever seen Gary unhappy about providing food for wildlife.

— LMO BRADLEY J. MYERS, SIGEL

Eagles Galore

ELK — In more than 24 years I had handled only one eagle, and that was in 1977. During deer season, however, I picked up an injured bald eagle, and then the following week was sent to pick up a roadkilled golden eagle. Not long after that, while interviewing a man about a wildlife case, I noticed a mounted eagle in his garage, which he had had illegally for a long time.

— WCO RICHARD S. BODENHORN, RIDGWAY

False Alarm

SCHUYLKILL — Most of my deputies not only work regular jobs, but they are also involved in community service as well. Sometimes they are so involved in these activities that they have trouble separating their jobs. One night we were staking out a poaching hotspot, and Deputy Dave Fidler apparently got bored, so he got out of the vehicle and tried to mimic a coyote by howling. About a mile away, deputies Jim Koons and Jeff Rinaldo, who were standing outside of their vehicle, heard the howls and Jeff said that Jim, who is a captain with the Hegins Fire Company, almost got hurt running to his truck radio to find out where the fire was.

— WCO STEVE HOWER, PINE GROVE

It's Working

GREENE — One of the goals of the concurrent antlered/antlerless deer season was to carry over more bucks, to better balance the buck/doe ratio. While patrolling in the late muzzleloader season, most of the hunters I talked to said they had seen a lot of bucks, with one hunter seeing four in one day.

— WCO RODNEY BURNS, WAYNESBURG

Hard to Beat

SUSQUEHANNA — State Police trooper Greg Deck had an exceptionally good day of hunting last fall. He bagged two grouse and two pheasants on SGL 35, and then went to another area and got a turkey.

— WCO DONALD BURCHELL, NEW MILFORD

Good Reminder

JEFFERSON — During deer season I noticed that many hunters had left latex gloves at the site where they field-dressed their deer. Wearing gloves is a good idea, but leaving them behind makes hunters look bad. Hunters, please carry a plastic bag to put your used gloves in. Littering leads to posted property and lost hunting opportunities.

— WCO ROGER A. HARTLESS, BROOKVILLE

Preliminary 2002-03 seasons and bag limits

THE 2002-03 seasons and bag limits proposed by the Board of Game Commissioners at its January meeting include antler restrictions for deer hunting, expanded bear hunting opportunities in the Poconos, a second elk hunt and third bobcat season, and a youth pheasant hunt. The public may offer comment on these proposals between now and the April 8-9 Board meeting, when seasons and bag limits for 2002-03 will come up for final approval.

Antler Restrictions

THE DEER SEASONS proposed are like last year's, but with two additions: Antler restrictions and giving junior hunters the option of taking an antlerless deer, in any county, with their general license tag.

As proposed, a legal antlered buck will have to have at least three points to an antler, except in Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Crawford, Erie, Indiana, Lawrence, Mercer, Washington and Westmoreland counties, where it will have to have four or more points to an antler.

As proposed, a "point" is "an antler projection at least one inch in length from base to tip, the brow tine and main beam tip shall be counted as points." Also, "protected deer" is defined as "a deer not defined as an antlered deer or antlerless deer." These definitions must be approved at a subsequent Board meeting before taking effect.

An "antlerless deer" will remain defined as "a deer without antlers, or

a deer with antlers both of which are less than 3 inches in length."

As explained by Dr. Gary Alt, traditionally, hunters have overharvested bucks and underharvested does, which has led to an imbalance in the ratio of bucks in prime breeding age (4 to 8 years of age) to does.

Alt noted that a plan to hold a 3-day rifle antlerless deer season in October for any properly licensed hunter was postponed, possibly until new deer management units are in place.

As proposed by Commissioner Stephen L. Mohr, junior license holders will be allowed to use their general license tag to take an antlerless deer in any county during any deer season. Junior hunters would still be allowed to apply for antlerless licenses. Junior hunters who use the general license tag for an antlerless deer will not be allowed to take an antlered deer.

Complete proposed 2002-03 seasons and bag limits begin on page 41.

New bear season

A NEW BEAR SEASON has been proposed to address growing human/bear conflicts in the northeast. The

season is slated for Dec. 2-7 (first week of concurrent rifle deer seasons) in Pike, Monroe and Carbon counties.

This season would be in addition to the regular, statewide bear season, preliminarily set for Nov. 25-27.

"This new approach aims to resolve bear problems at the source," said PGC biologist Mark Ternent. "It's a logical progression for our program, one that should provide relief to people in some sections of the Poconos. It also offers hunters a chance to pursue deer and bear at the same time."

This proposal, pending final approval at the April meeting, has the

potential to substantially increase bear harvests in this tri-county area. In 2001, bear hunters in Pike, Carbon and Monroe counties took 303 bears, down from the 345 in 2000.

The proposal was developed by the Game Commission's Nuisance Black Bear Management Committee, created to address bear conflicts with residents.

For additional information refer to Game Commission News Release 81-01, in the "Newsroom" on the agency's website, www.pgc.state.pa.us.

Alt to discuss deer on PCN

DR. GARY ALT is scheduled to appear on the Pennsylvania Cable Network's weekly "PCN Call-In Program" on Thursday, March 14, to discuss the new direction of the deer management program and to answer questions from callers (1-888-730-1310). The program is scheduled to air live at 7 p.m. (*Check local listings for the PCN channel in your area.*)

"Deer management remains a complex, but critically important issue for all Pennsylvanians," said Alt. "We need to explain our new initiatives to the public, and PCN's Call-In program offers a perfect opportunity to maximize our outreach efforts."

Available on 141 cable systems throughout the commonwealth, PCN is a nonprofit, nonpartisan cable television network that serves as the commonwealth's version of C-SPAN. PCN airs unedited live and same-day coverage of Pennsylvania Senate and House floor proceedings and committee hearings; along with press conferences, speeches and other public forums where the business of the state is conducted. PCN's live interactive call-in program allows viewers to speak directly with government officials, newsmakers and other knowledgeable parties on current commonwealth issues.

Youth pheasant season

A NEW YOUTH pheasant hunting season, held concurrently with the junior squirrel hunt, Oct. 12 and 14, highlights the proposed 2002-03 small game and wild turkey seasons and bag limits. The framework for this season was developed by the Youth Pheasant Hunting Committee, chaired by

Lori Richardson, PGC Outreach Coordinator. And like the junior squirrel hunt, participating young hunters do not need a hunting license, but must have completed a hunter education course.

Prior to the season, 3,500 pheasants will be released on 75,000 acres

open to public hunting. Junior hunters, however, will not be limited to hunting in those areas. Stocking lo-

cations will be publicized prior to the season. For more information see PGC News Release 81-01.

Jim Rowles receives rightful recognition

JIM ROWLES of Troutville, Clearfield County, was recognized at the January Commission meeting for harvesting the largest non-typical white-tailed deer in the Game Commission's 2001 Big Game Awards Program. The buck, taken in Jefferson County in 2000, scored 203-1, and ranks fifth in the state's all-time big game records for the nontypical white-tailed deer firearm category.

Rowles, whose score sheet form had been misplaced by the Game Commission, was excited to finally be officially recognized. PGC Bureau of Information and Education Director J. Carl Graybill Jr., who oversees the big game awards program, acknowledged the oversight last October. During the presentation in January, Graybill said, "This buck was something special. It is the largest known



JIM ROWLES received a plaque for his accomplishment. His buck is only one of three to rank in the top 10 nontypical bucks taken with a firearm over the past 10 years.

nontypical buck taken by a Pennsylvania hunter in the gun category in almost 50 years."

Preliminary approval given to state game lands use regs

FOLLOWING MORE than a year of public comment and discussion, the Board of Game Commissioners unanimously gave preliminary approval to several changes in state game lands use regulations, to better protect these wild places from misuse and degradation. If given final approval at the Board's meeting on April 9, the regulations will take effect on February 1, 2003.

"As more and more people seek to enjoy the great outdoors, state game lands have come under increased pres-

sure," said PGC executive director Vern Ross. "Due to the fact that our regulations are silent on recreational activities such as horseback and mountain bike riding, we have been unable to properly direct or manage this increased use of state game lands. And, in many cases, this has led to degradation or destruction of wildlife habitats, disruption of nesting or wintering wildlife populations, and competition with lawful hunting seasons.

"These regulations will provide common-sense guidelines, so that al-

ternative uses of state game lands may continue in a manner that does not conflict with our legislatively mandated mission, which is to protect and manage Pennsylvania's wild birds and mammals and to develop, conserve and preserve wildlife habitats."

Recognizing the need for public input in the development of the regulations, the Game Commission formed an ad hoc advisory committee comprised of a representative from each of the following interests: hunters, snowmobilers, mountain bikers, horseback riders, hikers, the forest product industry, water quality interests, the tourism industry, and nature enthusiasts. Just as important, as the process progressed, the Commission kept the public informed through all news media.

"In addition, the Game Commission sent three mailings to a large number of groups that would be affected," Ross said. "The Game Commission also held nine open houses to gather public comments about the recommended changes."

Ultimately, the committee drafted and forwarded 11 recommendations to Ross for review, which were presented with his comments to the Board. Under the regulations given preliminary approval, except with written permission of the Executive Director:

- No one could remove any manmade or natural object, except wildlife and fish lawfully taken during the open season, from state game lands. Objects that may not be removed include — but are not limited to — animals, rocks, minerals, sand and historical or archaeological artifacts. Under a recently enacted law, this regulation would not pertain to shed antlers from elk or deer;

- As long as the fire index rating maintained by the Department of

Conservation and Natural Resources is acceptable, anyone who builds a fire for warming or cooking purposes on state game lands must prevent the spread of the fire, attend to the fire at all times and completely extinguish the fire before leaving the site. A person causing a wildfire, in addition to possible criminal penalty and fines, is liable for all damages and costs of extinguishing the fire;

- Anyone who rides a non-motorized vehicle, conveyance or animal on state game lands must do so only on roads open to public travel or designated routes. Such riding activities will not be permitted, except on Sundays, from the second Saturday in September to the third Saturday in January, and from the second Saturday in April to the last Saturday in May. This does not apply to anyone lawfully engaged in hunting, trapping or fishing on state game lands;

- The Game Commission will designate routes for riding non-motorized vehicles, conveyances or animals according to compatibility with the management plan for each game lands. The public also may request the agency to consider other route designations;

- No one may use state game lands for personal, organization or commercial purposes other than the intended uses. Commercial activities include any activity in which a person directly or indirectly accepts consideration or value as compensation for the provision of goods or services, including transportation;

- No one may feed wildlife or put out any food, fruit, hay, grain, chemical, salt or other minerals intended for wildlife;

- No one may release any domestic animals, captive-bred or captive-raised game or wildlife on state game lands;

- No one may consume, possess or transport alcoholic beverages or controlled substances on state game lands;

- No one may operate a motor vehicle on state game lands in willful and wanton disregard for the safety of others or property, in excess of speed limits, or 25 miles per hour in areas where no limit is posted;

- No one may target shoot with firearms, bows and arrows, or devices capable of launching projectiles in a manner that could cause injury to persons or property or in areas posted closed to such activities. Also, except on shooting ranges, no one shall discharge any firearm, bow and arrow, or device capable of launching projectiles on state game lands that is not a lawful device to hunt game and wildlife; and

- No one may participate in an organized activity or event involving more than 10 persons, except for hunting or trapping. This would not apply to those activities that are not in conflict with the intended uses or purposes of state game lands or those activities that do not pose a potential

environmental or safety problem. Also, those not engaged in hunting, trapping or fishing on state game lands from the second Saturday in September to the third Saturday in January, and from the second Saturday in April to the last Saturday in May, inclusive, except for Sundays, must wear a minimum of 250 square inches of fluorescent orange on the head, chest or back combined, or, in lieu thereof, a hat.

"Now that the regulatory changes have received preliminary approval from the Board, the public will be able to offer additional comment before the Board takes the matter up for final approval in April," Ross said. "Throughout this process, it has been our goal to be a responsible and a responsive public agency. We have strived to accommodate public uses of state game lands where we can, and regulate where we have to, while never losing sight of our mission to protect and preserve the state's wildlife resource and its habitats, and Pennsylvania's unique hunting and trapping heritage."

Proposed 2002-03 seasons and bag limits

Squirrels, Red, Gray, Black and Fox (Combined): Special season for eligible junior hunters, with or without required license - Oct. 12-14 (6 daily, 12 in possession after first day).

Squirrels, Red, Gray, Black and Fox (Combined): Fall Season - Oct. 19-Nov. 30; Late Seasons - Dec. 16-24, and Dec. 26-Feb. 8, 2003 (6 daily, 12 in possession after first day).

Ruffed Grouse: Oct. 19-Nov. 30, Dec. 16-24 and Dec. 26-Jan. 11, 2003 (2 daily, 4 possession). There is no open season for taking ruffed grouse in that portion of SGL 176 in Centre County that is posted "RESEARCH AREA - NO GROUSE HUNTING."

Rabbit (Cottontail): Nov. 2-30, Dec. 16-24 and Dec. 26-Feb. 8, 2003 (4 daily, 8 possession).

Pheasant: Special season for eligible junior hunters, with or without required license - Oct. 12-14 (2 daily, 4 in possession).

Pheasant (Male Only): - Nov. 2-30. Male and female in designated areas - Nov. 2-30, Dec. 16-24 and Dec. 26-Feb. 8, 2003 (2 daily, 4 in possession).

Bobwhite Quail: Nov. 2-30 (4 daily, 8 possession). (Closed in Adams, Chester, Cumberland, Dauphin, Delaware, Franklin, Fulton, Juniata, Lancaster, Lebanon, Perry, Snyder and York counties.)

Hares (Snowshoe Rabbits) or Varying Hares: Dec. 26-Jan. 1, 2003 (1 daily, 2 possession).

Woodchucks (Groundhogs): No closed season except during the antlered and antlerless deer seasons and until noon daily during the spring gobbler season.

Crows: July 5-Dec. 1, and Dec. 27-April 6, 2003, on Friday, Saturday and Sunday only. No limit.

Starlings and English Sparrows: No closed season except during the antlered and antlerless deer seasons and until noon daily during the spring gobbler season. No limit.

Wild Turkey (Male or Female): Management Areas 1A, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7A & 8 -Nov. 2-23; Area 1B - Nov. 2-16; Area 7B- Nov. 4-9; Area 9B -Nov. 2-9; and Area 9A - Closed to Fall Turkey Hunting. (1 bird limit, either sex).

Spring Gobbler (Bearded bird only): April 26, 2003 - May 24, 2003. (1 bird limit)

Black Bear (Statewide): Nov. 25-27; and Dec. 2-7 in Carbon, Monroe and Pike counties. One bear per hunting license year.

Elk (Antlered or Antlerless): Nov. 18-23. Daily and season limit: one.

Deer, Bag Limits: One antlered deer per hunting license year. In any season, junior hunters may use their general license tag to take an antlerless deer in any county of the state. Otherwise, one antlerless deer per antlerless license, except in the late flintlock season.

Antler Restriction: Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Crawford, Erie, Indiana, Lawrence, Mercer, Washington and Westmoreland counties, four or more points to one antler. In all other counties, three or more points to an antler.

Deer, Archery (Antlered and Antlerless) Statewide: Oct. 5-Nov. 16 and Dec. 26-Jan. 11, 2003.

Deer (Antlered and Antlerless) Statewide: Dec. 2-14.

Antlerless Deer (Statewide): Oct. 24-26. Junior and Senior License holders, Disabled Person Permit (to use a vehicle) holders, and Pennsylvania residents serving on active duty in the U.S. Armed Services, with required antlerless license. Also included are persons 65 and older in the year of the application for a license and hold a valid adult license, and those who qualify for license and fee exemptions under section 2706.

Deer, Antlerless Flintlock (Statewide): Oct. 19-26.

Deer, Antlered or Antlerless Flintlock (Statewide): Dec. 26-Jan. 11, 2003. One antlered deer per hunting license year, or one antlerless deer and additional antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Deer, Antlerless (Military Bases): Hunting permitted on days established by the U.S. Department of the Army at Letterkenny Army Depot, Franklin County; New Cumberland Army Depot, York County; and Fort Detrick, Raven Rock Site, Adams County.

Deer, Special Regulations Areas (Allegheny, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia counties)

Archery (Bow and arrows only) Antlered and Antlerless : Oct. 5-Nov. 16, and Dec. 26-Jan. 11, 2003.

Antlered: Dec. 2-14.

Antlerless: Dec. 2-14 and Dec. 26 - Jan.11, 2003.

Furbearer, hunting

Raccoon and Foxes: Oct. 19-Feb. 22, 2003, unlimited.

Coyote, Opossum, Skunks and Weasels: No closed season, with certain exceptions during deer and spring turkey seasons. No limits.

Bobcat (Furbearer Management Zones 2 and 3): Oct. 19-Feb. 22, 2003. One per permit. (Bobcats may be taken only by furtakers in possession of a Bobcat Hunting-Trapping permit.)

Trapping

Mink and Muskrat: Nov. 23-Jan. 11, 2003. Unlimited.

Coyote, Foxes, Opossum, Raccoon, Skunks, Weasels: Oct. 20-Feb. 22, 2003. No limit.

Beaver (Statewide): Dec. 26-March 31, 2003 (Limits depend on Furbearer Management Zone).

Bobcat (Fubearer Management Zones 2 and 3): Oct. 20-Feb. 22, 2003. One per permit. (Bobcats may be taken only by furtakers in possession of a Bobcat Hunting-Trapping permit.)

Falconry

Squirrels (combined), Quail, Ruffed Grouse, Cottontail Rabbits, Snowshoe or Varying Hare, Ringneck Pheasant (Male or Female combined): Sept. 1-March 31, 2003. Daily and Field Possession limits vary.

No open season on other wild birds or mammals.

Waterfowl and Migratory Game Bird seasons will be established in accordance with Federal Regulations this summer.

1,278 acres to SGL system

THE BOARD unanimously approved five land options that will increase the state game lands system by 1,278 acres. The package includes the purchase of 1,170 acres from the Municipal Authority of the Borough of Shenandoah, Schuylkill County.

Including actions at the January meeting, the Board has approved the acquisition of more than 42,000 acres since July 1, 1999, when the last license fee increase went into effect.

Following is a county breakdown of the transactions.

Bradford County: 5 acres within SGL 123, from David E. and Barbara A. Saunders for \$750. The parcel is an interior holding that consists of an abandoned railroad bed.

Carbon County: 16-acre donation from the estate of John A. Rehrig, adjacent to SGL 217. The donation will eliminate boundary maintenance on the game lands, which currently contains 7,177 acres in Carbon, Lehigh and Schuylkill counties.

Columbia/Schuylkill counties: 1,170 acres purchased from the Mu-

nicipal Authority of the Borough of Shenandoah, Schuylkill County, for \$400,000. This parcel will comprise a new state game land, SGL 329. As this purchase exceeds \$300,000, the General Assembly and Governor must authorize the acquisition through the capital budget appropriation process prior to the transaction taking effect.

Schuylkill County: 87 acres adjacent to SGL 326, purchased from The Wildlands Conservancy for \$34,800. The new parcel will eliminate the need for boundary maintenance, and provide public access to the northern portion of SGL 326 just south of Gordon. SGL 326, which currently contains 2,400 acres, originally was authorized by the Board to be purchased from The Wildlands Conservancy at its January 2001 meeting. As that purchase price was \$810,000, it required capital budget approval by the General Assembly and Governor, which has yet to take place.

Schuylkill County: one-half acre donated by P. Thomas Feeser, Barbara Gill and Robert Feeser, adjacent to SGL 286. The donation will provide additional public access to SGL 286, which currently contains 478 acres.

The Board also unanimously approved a coal/mineral and two oil/gas lease agreements on state game lands that ultimately will benefit wildlife.

- a coal/mineral lease with P & N Coal Company Inc. of Punxsutawney,

Jefferson County, which ultimately will improve the water quality in the Dents Run watershed. As part of the 10-year lease, P & N Coal will remove about 1.3 million tons of limestone and 486,000 tons of coal from a 70-acre tract of SGL 311 in Elk County. An additional 83 acres will be used for reclamation and erosion and sedimentation control and operational support. The project also will eliminate 5,200 feet of abandoned highwall and 40 acres of coal spoil, and provide the limestone necessary for additional reclamation projects within the watershed. The Game Commission has agreed to forego the royalty value on the first 500,000 tons of limestone, which will be used to complete a total of seven reclamation projects that will improve water quality on 24 miles of impaired streams, including Porcupine Run. In return, P & N Coal will pay the Game Commission a graduated royalty payment for the coal, depending on the quality and market price, and the remaining limestone. The total royalty payment to the PGC is estimated to be \$1.17 million.

- two oil/gas leases with the Mid-East Oil Company of Indiana, Indiana County, to enable the company to place up to 48 well sites of 1.5 acres each on SGL 100 in Centre County. Additionally, Mid-East has agreed to convey an 80-acre tract of land adjacent to SGL 100 in Cooper Township,

CONTACTING THE REGION OFFICES

Northwest — 877-877-0299

Southwest — 877-877-7137

Northcentral — 877-877-7674

Southcentral — 877-877-9107

Northeast — 877-877-9357

Southeast — 877-877-9470

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.

Clearfield County, subject to a 10-acre lifetime lease to an individual, and to operate its private-lease holdings, which entail 3,920 surface acres of SGL 100, in accordance with

Game Commission habitat improvement standards. Hunters also will benefit from this agreement by way of a new road access to SGL 100, off Township Road 710 or Hartline Road.

Deer management working group praises progress

TWO YEARS after presenting its deer management recommendations to the Board of Game Commissioners, Scot J. Williamson, former chairman of the Game Commission's Deer Management Working Group (DMWG), came back to offer an appraisal of the agency's progress at implementing DMWG recommendations.

"Nearly all respondents indicated their pleasure with the new programs instituted by the Game Commission since the working group disbanded," said Williamson, field representative for the Wildlife Management Institute. He noted that the DMWG had singled out Dr. Gary Alt, "for special commendation for his efforts to develop imaginative, science-based deer management programs, as well as his energetic attempts to broaden public support for deer management.

"Nearly half of the respondents indicated the rate of implementation of some of the Working Group's recommendations was slower than desired," Williamson said. "Most who made this comment acknowledged that due to the complexities of some of the recommendations, or due to the time constraints required by imple-

mentation of other regulatory programs, the delays were understandable."

Williamson also noted that several members indicated new-found concern over the recommendation that the Game Commission use Citizen Task Forces (CTFs) to develop deer density targets.

"While there is still general support for CTFs, the need for caution was expressed to ensure that CTFs did not hinder the Game Commission's ability to establish sound deer management policies," Williamson said.

"Finally, several members indicated their interest in re-convening the DMWG so as to continue the process of constituent input into deer management."

Created in 1998, the DMWG made six recommendations to the agency's Board of Commissioners at the January 2000 meeting. It was comprised of individuals representing hunters, governmental officials, foresters and farmers, and was charged with developing recommendations on ways to address the controversial and contentious issues that have polarized factions interested in deer and their management.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

Dunkle elected president

AT THE January meeting, Commissioner Samuel J. Dunkle, of Duncansville, Blair County, was elected president. A Board member since 1996, Dunkle previously served as Board vice president. Game Commissioner Robert J. Gilford, Lickingville, Clarion County, was elected Board vice president. Gilford was appointed to the Board on June 9, 1998. Commissioner Russell E. Schleiden, Centre Hall, Centre County, was appointed secretary. Schleiden was appointed to the Board on Nov. 21, 2000.

Other board action included:

- Gave preliminary approval to define lawful devices for hunting small game to include: a shotgun with fine shot; muzzleloading rifle or handgun 36-caliber or less; rimfire rifle or handgun 22-caliber or less; and bow and arrow with or without broadheads. The caliber restrictions shall not apply to groundhog hunting.

- Gave preliminary approval to provide definitions for "arrow," "bow," "broadhead," and "crossbow bolt" under Title 58, a compilation of Game Commission regulations governing hunting, trapping and wildlife conservation. Highlights of the proposed definitions include: 1.) Arrow and broadhead shall have a combined weight of at least 400 grains. 2.) Bows shall have a peak draw weight not less than 35 pounds. 3.) Broadheads shall have an outside diameter or width of at least 7/8-inch with no less than two cutting edges in the same plane throughout the length of the cutting surface.

- Gave final approval to charge those applying for general hunting or furtaker licenses by mail, fax or over the Internet an additional fee based on prevailing first-class postage rates. For this fee, licenses will be sent to applicants by standard, first-class mail;

- Approved accepting \$5,000 from the state Department of Environmental Protection for the Per-

egrine Falcon Satellite Telemetry project. The Board recently approved a contract to use federal Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program funds to place satellite telemetry units on nestling peregrine falcons in Pennsylvania to track their activities for up to three years. The project cooperator is the Canadian Peregrine Foundation;

- Approved the realignment of three wildlife conservation officer districts in Potter County;

- Allocated \$5,000 to Westsylvania Outdoor Heritage, May 2-4 at the Huntingdon County Fairgrounds;

- Gave final approval to amend the definition of an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) that may be used on state game lands by disabled permit holders to read: A Class I ATV or a motorized off-highway vehicle 58 inches or less in width, having a dry weight of 900 pounds or less, traveling on four or more low-pressure tires and having a bench seat. In addition, the ATV must display a valid registration plate issued by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources;

- Gave preliminary approval to allow licensed furtakers to use traps to take groundhogs. This will allow furtakers to help farmers deal with nuisance groundhogs;

- Gave preliminary approval to allow bobcat permit holders to take bobcats while deer hunting;

- Gave preliminary approval to define when deer and bear hunters may take coyotes. Under the change, coyotes could be taken from “the first day to the last day inclusive of any deer or bear season only by persons lawfully engaged in hunting deer or bear who have a valid tag;”
- Directed staff to develop language to eliminate the muzzleloader license purchasing deadline;
- Directed staff to hasten development of a citizens task force plan for deer management and creation of new deer management units;
- Directed the Bureau of Law Enforcement to prepare regulatory language making it unlawful to train dogs on wildlife from April 1 to July 31;
- Directed staff to continue investigating expansion of the state’s either-sex pheasant hunting area;
- Requested staff continue to survey hunter values and attitudes;
- Directed staff to consider using wildlife conservation officers and deputies in pheasant stocking efforts;

- Directed staff to find funding sources to assist the Hunters Sharing the Harvest Program;
- Asked staff to establish a policy establishing how wildlife killed on highways and wildlife parts — such as deer antlers — shall be processed or disposed of by field officers;
- Asked staff to evaluate the Bureau of Wildlife Management’s current organizational structure, needs, personnel assignments, resource allocations, projects and programs for the April meeting;
- Asked staff to investigate the feasibility of establishing a pheasant stamp for small game hunters;
- Scheduled upcoming meetings of the Pennsylvania Board of Game Commissioners on the following dates: April 8 and 9; June 10 and 11; October 7 and 8; and January 5, 6 and 7, 2003.

Actions given preliminary approval must be approved at a subsequent Board meeting before taking effect.

Taxidermy exam

THE SPRING TAXIDERMY exam will be held the week of April 15. Those interested in taking this exam must submit a completed application, along with the appropriate fee, to their district wildlife conservation officer by March 4. Applications may be obtained from any Game Commission region office. The exam will be

held at the Southcentral Region Office in Huntingdon.

To practice taxidermy in Pennsylvania, a person must have a permit issued by the Game Commission. The permit is issued to persons 18 years of age and older who are residents of Pennsylvania and who pass the taxidermy examination.

Fulton County residents join fight against jacklighters

FOLLOWING a 2-year, joint investigation, Game Commission WCOs, assisted by local residents and the State Police Crime Lab, have prosecuted two York County men for a

jacklighting incident on Dec. 12, 1999. The case, heard before Fulton County District Justice Carol Jean Johnson, resulted in nearly \$6,000 in fines and additional penalties.



RICH WALTON was named the Northeast Region's Outstanding Deputy of the Year. From Wilkes-Barre, Rich has been serving the people of Luzerne County for 37 years. He also is a dispatcher for the region, and an expert marksman, too.

defendants spotlighting and shooting everything illuminated by their spotlight beam.

WCO Stephen A. Leiendecker headed the investigation and was assisted by deputy WCOs Andy Carbaugh, Richard Carbaugh, Coy Hill, Willard Hill, Bob Strait and Berley Souders.

Evidence gathered at the scene, including a spent cartridge casing and bullet fragments from one of the illegally taken deer, was sent along with several firearms collected during a search of the defendants' camp to the State Police Crime Laboratory in Harrisburg. Ballistic tests conducted by Firearm and Tool Mark Examiner Trooper David M. Hatfield were conclusive, and eventually led to the charges filed against the two jacklighters.

During the incident, at least four deer were shot and left lay. The defendants made no attempt to recover the dead and injured deer. A fifth deer was recovered during a search of the defendants' camp.

"The prosecution of these individuals would not have been possible without the willingness of local residents to step forward and the assistance of the State Police Crime Lab," Leiendecker said.

Fulton County District Attorney Dwight Harvey led the prosecution, and represented the Commonwealth, beginning with the hearing at the District Justice office.

The actions of the defendants also implicated a junior hunter who was not charged in the incident.

Marlin "Bud" Shaffer Sr., 52, of York, pled guilty to four counts of "unlawful use of lights while hunting" when the charges were filed on May 16, 2001. Each count carries a \$600 fine. Shaffer may lose his hunting and trapping privileges in Pennsylvania for up to seven years.

Eric Clauser, 29, of Dover, pled not guilty and was later found guilty of four counts of "unlawful use of lights while hunting" at a hearing before District Justice Johnson on Nov. 16, 2001. Each count carries a \$600 fine, and possible loss of hunting and trapping privileges in Pennsylvania for up to seven years.

Additional charges filed against the two men range from, "possession of a license belonging to another person" and two additional counts of "unlawful possession of game or wildlife," namely, white-tailed deer.

In a shooting spree that spanned several hours between midnight and the early daylight hours of Dec. 12, 1999 — just a day prior to the opening of the antlerless deer season that year — witnesses observed the two



Off the Wire

by Bob D'Angelo

CONNECTICUT

Hunters took 190 turkeys during the 13-day fall firearms season in 2000 — down 34 percent from the 290 taken in 1999. Bowhunters during the archery-only season in 2000 added another 41.

NORTH DAKOTA

In 2000, 4,707 hunters in North Dakota bagged an estimated 24,249 cottontail rabbits, an average of slightly more than five rabbits per hunter.

ARIZONA

The Arizona Game and Fish Commission has approved the hunting of the first Gould's turkey subspecies in the state since the birds were transferred to their native range in Arizona's Huachuca Mountains from Mexico in 1983. The last populations of Gould's had been killed off more than 60 years ago, but today there are more than 100 of the birds. The commission approved two tags for the 2002 spring season.

WYOMING

After a dip in 1999, the state elk harvest rebounded in 2000 to 23,727, which represents a 44 percent hunter success rate.

MARYLAND

A survey of Maryland's black bear population indicates there's an estimated 227 bears from Cumberland to the western border of the state, and about 100 more east of Cumberland.

MAINE

Maine documented 2,126 moose/vehicle collisions from 1996 through 1998, resulting in six human fatalities, 637 injuries, and an estimated economic loss of more than \$50 million. For comparison, one in 5,000 deer/vehicle collisions results in a human fatality.

NORTH DAKOTA

Hunters took 284,000 pheasants during the 2000 season. The average annual harvest in the 1990s was 248,000, with a high of 315,000 birds in 1992, and a low of 136,000 in 1997.

TURKEYS

There were 6,461 wild turkeys released in 29 states and Canada in 2001, and National Wild Turkey Federation chapters, volunteers and cooperators helped 12 states purchase more than 16,438 acres of turkey habitat.

ABUNDANT WHITETAILS

White-tailed deer in North America numbered just 350,000 in 1900. Today, thanks mostly to sportsmen, there are more than 30 million.

*There's more to hunting than just killing —
a whole lot more.*

Honor and the Hunter



Bob Steiner

TO HUNT is to take part in actions that are forever beyond our understanding. Hunting is an imperative so old that its roots are buried too deep within our psyches to uncover fully, no matter how we dig and pry. To say we are trying to understand hunting is just a restatement of mankind's age-old quest to completely understand ourselves.

The question has never been an easy one. Philosophers, scientists, humorists and other deep thinkers have filled volumes on the subject. Seeking to know the nature of

hunting is like trying to figure out the shape of our own nose. It's too close, too much a part of us that, struggle as we may, we only get dim glimpses of the tip. That is all that can be revealed to us without a mirror, and even mirrors can't show all sides at once.

Sometimes a mirror catches a new angle on the subject, though, revealing something suspected but not seen clearly before. I got that kind of view while doing some reading this past winter, during the long nights when most of the hunting seasons were over. The book quoted the American author William Faulkner, from a story in which a boy shoots his first buck. Addressing the deer he has killed, the boy is faced with what that killing means and how it affects him.

"I slew you, the boy thinks. My bearing must not shame your quitting life, he understands. My conduct forever onward must become your death."

The quotes were from Faulkner's *Delta Autumn*. I hadn't thought of the author since a high school homework assignment many years ago. If I had read the story then, it wouldn't have meant much to me. I had never hunted. Now, when I read the lines I was different. I had hunted. And I was stunned.

Those words made concrete, real and touchable, a sentiment I had until then only sensed intuitively in my hunting life.



Linda Steiner

A HUNTER is irreversibly altered at the instant of a kill. Before the shot he was a waiting pupa in a cocoon, but now he wakes to find himself in an unfamiliar form that he is only beginning to understand.

This was the respectful relationship that develops between the hunter and the hunted when they become the killer and killed.

Those who don't hunt may mistake the hunter's role in the taking of an animal's life. They might think the event is all about power and that the power is all on one side. They may think that the killing is about overmastering, about defeating that which was killed. Hunters know this isn't so. Tested for truth, that statement about what occurs when they shoot a wild animal has a false, jarring ring. The idea of a winner and a loser in the hunt isn't at all what truly happens. Hunters know deep inside, as deep as hunting's roots reach, that that which has been killed has power, too, over that which has killed it.

"I slew you." That is an awful realization for a hunter, "awful" as in the original meaning of the word, something that fills with awe, not something that is bad or evil. Although a hunter's first kill is cut deepest in meaning and recollection, each succeed-

ing game kill is as individual as it is wonderful and terrible. We reach out, with an extension of ourselves, whether arrow or bullet or lead ball, and a being in the fullness of life, hot blood coursing, smelling, seeing, sensing, is suddenly no more. The body is there, but that which gave it motion, the vital force that made it a thing incomparable, has fled and can't be returned. Death is forever.

As hunters, we know it is we who have done that, for worthwhile reasons that range from getting wild meat to participating in an antique natural ritual. The words "I slew you" do not signify triumph. They are not shouted, not accompanied by the gladiator's foot on the fallen. I slew you comes whispering unbidden into the brain, comes echoing down the halls of the mind, bringing with it a great weight and import and responsibility, and a realization of a shift of power.

The killing has changed everything for both the killer and killed. Of course, the animal has reached the ending for which we all had our beginning. We can let its private conclusion rest. *Finis*. For the hunter, his mortal journey goes on, but at the instant of the kill, he has also been irreversibly altered. With the kill, the hunter is made anew. Before the shot he was a waiting pupa in a cocoon. He now wakes to find himself in an unfamiliar form that he is only beginning to feel and understand. He struggles with the strangeness, suspecting he has been given wings and not yet sure what to do with them. But he knows they are important.

"My bearing must not shame your quitting life." Between killer and killed a tie arises that cannot be cut. It's a bond tighter than a marriage, a link akin to parent and child, for such deaths always give rebirth to the deathless circle of life. It is fathered by the humbleness a hunter feels in the face of what he has done. It grows from the respect he owes to the animal he has killed. Much more than that, it is a promise about what the hunter must be from now on, now

that he has taken that animal's life. The death melds into the hunter, shapes how he has to act, to speak, how he must show himself to himself and to others. We have given this multi-faceted concept a plain name that belies its depth, breadth and carat-weight. We call it "sportsmanship."

I had always thought that the honor, fair play and gentlemanly conduct of a sportsman had to do with how a hunter conducted himself (or herself) during the hunt. I had always thought being a sportsman meant pursuing game in a way that evened out the capabilities of the animal and the human, to make hunting a challenge that did both sides, with their disparate talents, justice. I had assumed sportsmanship meant the way a hunter acted around other hunters, each doing his part and sharing

the work and opportunities, being courteous and helpful in the field. I hadn't thought that being a sportsman was an expression of what the hunter owed, at all times and in all ways, to the life of the game he had taken.

What a sportsman must do is as simple as it is beautiful: Live so that you honor the life you took. That is the only course that makes both the life and the death valuable.

"My conduct forever onward must become your death." Those are words of truth cloaked in a work of fiction, in the thoughts of a boy toward his first buck. We grapple as he did with the significance of the kill at conclusion of the hunt, knowing in our heart that it is a beginning and not an end. □

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The Huron Native American tribe named them “ee-ree-ah-gee” or “big-tailed” ones, for their long, furry, ringed tails. That name was later shortened to “Erie.” So both the great lake and the city were named for raccoons.

Courting Raccoons

IF I HAD another life to live, I would be a mammalogist. But instead of going to Africa to study the behavior of animals such as elephants or chimpanzees, I would specialize in some of eastern North America's most common mammals. Countless books have been written about tigers and lions, elephants and chimpanzees, but few, if any, about the lives of gray foxes, porcupines, raccoons or fox squirrels. Yet, over the years, I have observed behaviors in those and other critters that I cannot verify in either the popular or scientific literature.

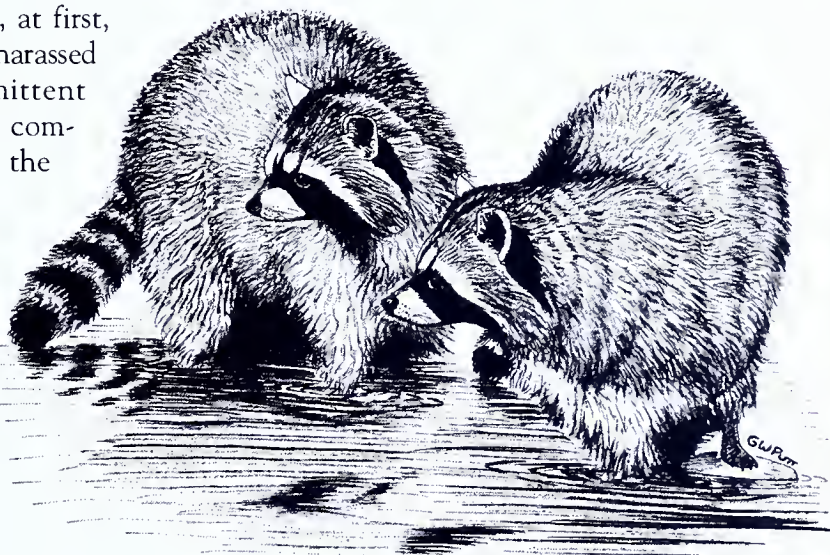
For instance, back on March 9, 2000, as I walked along Greenbrier Trail, I was suddenly stopped in my tracks by growling shrieks that I thought, at first, were made by an owl being harassed by crows. Yet the intermittent shrieks did not seem to be coming from the same place as the cawing crows.

Puzzled by the sound, I sat down in a dense grove of striped maple trees just as it started to shower. Under my umbrella, I continued listening to the growling shrieks, but I still could not pinpoint the source. When it

stopped raining, I resumed my walk, moving quietly as I scanned the trees above the trail.

Finally, I spotted a raccoon climbing out on a tree branch and then down the trunk of a red oak in pursuit of another raccoon perched on a branch on the opposite side of the tree from where I was standing. I quickly decided that the shrieking raccoon was the female and the pursuer the male.

More shrieking erupted, and then the male climbed several feet above the motionless female and moved restlessly around on branches and tree trunk as if he was trying to figure out another approach. Slowly he slid down the trunk head first toward



the female, all the time emitting calls that sounded like clicking castanets, and settled into a tree crotch next to the female. He continued to be restless, periodically moving around in slow motion, while the female, partly hidden from me by a mass of grapevines, remained still.

Frustrated by my somewhat obstructed view of the proceedings, I climbed up the ridge so that I could look down at the raccoons' tree. I watched as the male descended below the female and then climbed back up above her. She shrieked several times, he growled, and finally he lay down on top of her. They looked like amorphous, fuzzy blobs in the tree, veiled, as they were, by the grapevines. Finally, he moved around, his tail up, then down, his forepaws stroking her face. Whenever he moved, she shrieked, but he was firmly planted on top of her. At the time, I thought I was witnessing mating. Later, I learned that raccoon matings are much rougher affairs and last almost an hour — or, at least, the one mating ever observed in the wild and recorded did so.

Howard J. Stains published "The Raccoon in Kansas" in 1956. Stains had studied raccoons in the field from July 1951 to November 1954. Despite devoting 2,550 man-hours to his work, he observed mating raccoons only once — on February 26, 1954 — and it is his work that has been cited in every account of raccoons I have read. After reading his detailed account, I could understand why no one goes into any detail about raccoon mating. If it was made into a movie, it would probably earn a R or maybe even an X rating. Either the raccoons I was watching had not read Stains's paper or their courtship was much gentler than their mating.

After several minutes, the male raccoon arose and chased the female higher up the tree, she shrieking, he making purring clucks. They met nose to nose and patted each other's faces with their forepaws. Then the female curled up in a furry ball while the male again restlessly moved around,

sniffing her backside as if he were checking to see if she was ready to mate. At last he retreated a couple feet below her and settled down just as the sun appeared from behind the lowering clouds.

Unable to continue watching them, I reluctantly turned homeward when the raccoons quieted down, convinced that I had seen only a portion of what seemed to be an intricate courtship.

Over the next several weeks I pored over books and scientific papers on raccoons. All of them had little or nothing to say about courtship or mating. The casual reader might even conclude that raccoons are the result of immaculate conception. Once I found the Stains paper, though, I understood why.

Finally, I found an article published in the journal *Animal Behavior* in 1999, by Stanley D. Gehrt and Erik K. Fritzell who had radio-monitored raccoons in southern Texas during 1990-92. They wanted to find out if different raccoons followed different mating strategies.

Sure enough, Gehrt and Fritzell discovered an incredible variation in the mating strategies of raccoons, even within the limited population they studied. Consortship, which they defined as a "diurnal association between an adult male and female observed resting together or sharing a small den structure with a single opening," lasted anywhere from one to three days. During 62 percent of consortiums, one female consorted with only one male. The rest consorted with between two and four males. Those with shorter estrous periods, between two and three days, consorted with only one male. Those with longer estrous periods (four to six days) consorted with more than one male. But exactly what they did during this period remained murky.

The males, themselves, formed loose groups in a home range and the dominant male consorted with most of the females while subordinate males tried to find a female before the dominant male. In addition, solitary males roamed from home

range to home range in search of females.

While Gehrt and Fritzell did not mention the specifics of raccoon courtship, it was obvious that the whole process is incredibly varied, which made me feel lucky to have been given such an intimate look at a portion of the process.

Whatever their courtship and mating strategies may be, though, the result is the birth of two to seven cubs 63

days later in the female's tree den. Two years in a row, near the end of April, I heard the bird-like twittering of newborn raccoon cubs coming from a hole 20 feet up in a black locust snag. At one point, my husband Bruce put a ladder against the snag and climbed up to watch a mother raccoon nursing young. Later, a youngster, its eyes tightly shut, poked its masked face out of the hole.

The cubs finally open their eyes at four weeks of age and their twittering changed to churrs and growls. If the den is disturbed, they hiss, and their distress calls sound like a crying human infant.

At the same time the female begins to wean them, when they are six to nine weeks old, she also moves them from her den tree to a ground bed on the forest floor or in a wetland. By then they are playing exuberantly. A few weeks later they begin to accompany her on short, round-trip excursions. Within a week they are able to move and bed together, following their mother as she emits a constant low, grumbling purr. When they disobey, she slaps their rear ends. Once they are thoroughly weaned, at four months of age, they are more independent, trailing behind or ahead of her. Throughout the summer she teaches them to climb and hunt for food.

They spend the autumn fattening up on a wide variety of wild fruits and nuts, especially acorns, and usually den together in the winter. Raccoons are not true hibernators, but here in central Pennsylvania and farther north they tend to spend the bitter months of mid-January through February in restless sleep. Their body temperature drops from 100.6 to 96 degrees Fahrenheit,

they don't urinate or defecate, and they live on their stored body fat, losing half their body weight by spring.

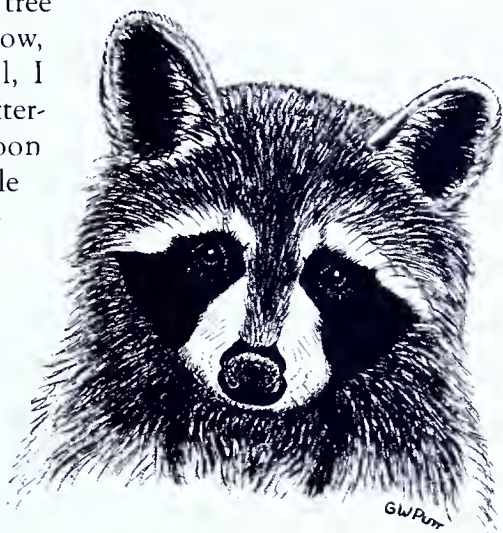
One researcher found 23 raccoons, half of which were juveniles, denning in an abandoned Minnesota house. Another group denned under the pulpit of an active, rural Methodist church. They may also den in skunk or woodchuck holes,

and when spring comes, they fight. Our son Dave can testify to that. A menagerie of critters den under our guesthouse where he lives — a porcupine, woodchuck, skunk, and raccoons — and Dave's sleep is often interrupted by shrieks, yells and growls from his quarreling tenants.

Once they leave their winter dens, families disperse. Males travel farther than females, as much as ten miles or more, and one radio-tagged male went 26.7 miles.

Raccoons are ecological opportunists that range from Panama to Canada. They eat both animal and vegetable matter such as grasshoppers, earthworms, snails, spiders, birds and their eggs, small mammals, frogs, fish, wild grapes, beechnuts, apples, and corn, although their favorite food is said to be crayfish.

A wide body of folklore has sprung up around them, beginning with the Indian tribes that endowed them with all sorts of



Straight from the Bowstring

By John Kasun

In bowhunting, paying attention to details can make a big difference, so it only makes good sense to ensure that your equipment won't fail at an inopportune time.

Bowhunting Maintenance



BEFORE heading afield bowhunters need to make sure their treestand is in proper working order and that all hardware is in place and tight.

IN REAL ESTATE there is a saying that the three most important things are location, location, location. In bowhunting the same thing could be said about details, details, details.

Bowhunting is a game of inches and seconds. Things happen quickly and at close

range. When a bowhunter makes an error in judgment, technique or equipment, it usually results in a miss. Having problems at the wrong time can mean not just a lost opportunity, but perhaps missing the opportunity of a lifetime.

Murphy's Law states, "If something can go wrong it will." The secret to bowhunting success is determining what can go wrong and then making sure it doesn't. An important area in this regard that is often overlooked is equipment maintenance. Making sure that all of your equipment is in proper working order is one sure way to increase your chances of connecting when it counts. Let's look at some simple things that can be done to prevent some major problems in the field.

Bows

With today's improved materials and manufacturing methods, bow failures are rare. However, damage can result from misuse, such as "dry firing," say, or dropping a bow from a 15-foot treestand with a 10-foot rope. Periodically check the bow limbs for signs of lamination separations or stress cracks, both of which are warning signs of potential trouble. Perform both a visual and physical inspection. Get into the

habit of simply running your fingers over the bow limbs. Potential defects often show up as small splinters or bumps, which can be hard to see but easily detected by touch. Also check for any loose or missing axle clips, locking nuts and other hardware, and replace as required.

Cables

Metal cables, common on many older compounds, should be checked frequently. Most cable failures occur at the junction between the cable and the molded end, commonly called the teardrop, to which the string attaches. Examine this area closely for any evidence of separation between the cable coating and the teardrop. If any cable strands are exposed, it's a sure sign of imminent failure and the cable should be replaced immediately. Also, any lump or twist under the cable coating is an indication of a broken strand within the cable itself, again requiring replacement. Other clues to internal cable failure are the sudden enlargement of your group size and erratic arrow flight for no apparent reason.

Cams

It's a good idea to have your local pro shop inspect, lubricate, (or replace, if necessary), your cam axles and bearings or bushings on a yearly basis. This will ensure your bow is operating at its peak efficiency. Frequently inspect the string grooves on your cams for dirt or any nicks or sharp edges. Setting your bow down on the bottom cam when shooting or allowing it to encounter the ground when lowering it from a treestand can fill the groove with dirt or nick the edges of the groove. Either of these will cause undue wear on the power cables or bowstring, which could lead to a failure at the most inopportune time.

Bowstrings

Inspect and replace any bowstring that shows signs of wear, fraying or broken strands, as the string could break, possibly damaging your bow. While broken strings

are rare, loose servings are common and just as troublesome. Most manufacturers use monofilament to serve their bowstrings. Monofilament servings have a nasty habit of breaking or working loose after a period of time, resulting in the loss of your nocking point location. If this happens during the hunting season, you'll have to replace the serving or the string and retune and sight-in the bow again. Either of these could mean lost hunting time or, possibly, a ruined hunt.

To avoid this potential problem I remove the monofilament serving from my hunting bowstring and replace it with nylon serving. In addition, I put a double serving below the nocking point where the string contacts the arm guard, to increase its wear resistance, and then apply a light coating of glue on approximately one inch of the serving at each end, adding extra insurance against the serving unraveling.

The servings holding the string peep also should be checked at this time. A loose serving on a string peep can result in the peep being shot from the string upon release. This could mean a trip back to the archery shop and the range before hunting can resume. Again a little dab of glue on the serving will help hold it in place.

Another component that should be replaced on a regular basis is the rubber tube attached between the bowstring or power cable and the string peep, which helps position the peep at full draw. These rubber tubes receive a lot of hard use, stretching with every shot, and should be considered a wear item. I always install a new tube just prior to the hunting season. When installing a new tube cut it just long enough so it causes the peep to rotate to the proper position at full draw without placing undue stress on the tube. Cutting the tube too short will require it to stretch excessively on each shot, causing it to fail prematurely.

Bow Sights

A hunting bow is subject to many bumps during the hunting season, which

can lead to the loosening of the bow sight pins, and nothing can ruin a hunt quicker than a sight pin that slides down the sight bar. Unfortunately, the first indication the bowhunter has that this has happened is usually by watching his arrow fly well over the top of the target. Making sure all sight pins are snug after the sight settings are set is only half the solution, though. Take the time to mark the position of the sight pins with a spot of paint or a piece of tape. Then, in the event a pin does loosen, it can be easily reset to its proper position without a trip to the range.

Squeaks and Rattles

Because bowhunting is done at such close ranges, noise is a factor. Be on the alert for any noise that is generated by any of your bowhunting gear. Make sure all mounting screws on bow sights or bow quivers are snug. The material installed on most arrow rests to dampen the noise caused by the arrow being drawn across it normally has a limited life and must be replaced on a regular basis. Make it a practice to install new dampening material prior to the season.

I have found that some cable guard slides that are smooth and quiet in dry weather hang up and screech when wet, depending upon the slide material and the coating on the cable guard. To avoid finding this out the hard way, spray some water on the slide and cable guard and see how they react to moisture. If the slide grabs and hangs up, replace it with one made from a more suitable material.

Arrows

No bowhunter should ever consider hunting with any arrow that is not in perfect condition. Something as simple as a cracked nock or a loose fletching can send an arrow well off of the mark. Before going afield inspect all nocks and fletching on your hunting arrows to ensure they are free of any defects. Fletching normally comes loose at either end and is easy to spot. On



AN OFTEN overlooked maintenance item is the rubber tubing that ensures the proper position of the string peep sight. Because this tubing has a habit of breaking at the worst time, it's recommended that it be replaced before each hunting season.

the other hand, a nock with a hairline crack can be difficult to detect unless examined closely. If a cracked nock breaks upon release it can have the same effect as a dry fire, and damage to the bow may result. Repair or replace any defective nocks or fletching.

Aluminum shafts should be checked for straightness. While special arrow straightening devices are available, a quick and simple check is to simply roll the shaft over a flat surface, allowing the fletching to overhang the edge of the surface. A kitchen countertop or glass coffee table will do nicely. A straight shaft will roll smoothly and quietly, while a bent one will hop and chatter. While arrows with long, gradual bends can be straightened, I prefer to replace them.

When using carbon or graphite shafts, inspect them carefully for any nicks or cracks in the surface. These defects can be caused by one shaft striking another while target shooting or when a shaft that misses the target encounters a rock. A shaft with

a defect should be destroyed, because it could fracture upon release, possibly causing injury to the shooter.

Arrow Rest

An arrow rest is a critical component of any bowhunting outfit and is subjected to harsh conditions during the hunting season. If you are shooting a spring-loaded rest, check it frequently to make sure it is free of dirt and moisture and keep it lightly lubricated. Any foreign material in the spring mechanism can cause the rest to react differently shot to shot and, therefore, change the impact point of your arrows.

Treestands/Safety Belts

While a bent arrow can cause a miss and a broken bowstring is an inconvenience, a defective treestand can cause serious injury or death. Treestand inspection is not only a must, it should be done before every use. Check the stand thoroughly to be sure that all hardware is in place and properly tightened. If any hardware is missing it should be replaced, and only with hardware of the proper tensile strength as recommended by the manufacturer. All hardware is not created equal, and some low strength nuts and bolts that may be fine for around the house are totally unsuitable for use on a treestand. High quality hardware is available from any hardware store for just a slight additional cost.

Place your treestand on a tree about one foot off of the ground and check for any squeaks by shifting your weight from side to side. What sounds like a slight squeak now will sound like an explosion if there is a big buck under your stand. Normally, some slight tightening or lubricating will quickly solve the problem.

Inspect all components for wear or dam-

age and repair or replace as required. Check all metal parts and welds for signs of cracking. In the event your stand requires any part to be replaced, use only components supplied directly from the original manufacturer. If any defective welds are found, return the stand to the manufacturer for repair or replacement. Altering a treestand not only voids the warranty, it can place the user in extreme danger. Don't take a chance. Remember that you're betting a few dollars against a lifetime of pain or even death, it's not worth it.

After you're sure your stand is in a safe condition, touch up any areas where the paint is worn. The sun hitting a shiny spot may be just enough to send that big buck scrambling for cover.

Safety belts should be checked for wear as well, as any loose stitching, or cracked or broken hardware could cause serious problems. Many economical safety belts are available today, and it's much better to replace an old belt than to attempt a repair. When replacing any safety belt, I strongly recommend replacing it with a full body harness. Unlike a waist style safety belt, a full body harness will hold the user upright in case of a fall. A full body harness will also prevent the possibility of suffocation that can occur with a waist style belt in the event the belt slips up around the chest.

Conclusions

While simple maintenance is not as exciting as shooting, scouting or hunting for deer, it's just as important when it comes to being ready for that once in a lifetime opportunity. Taking the time to check your bowhunting gear and being aware of things that can go wrong will put you one step closer to becoming a continually safe, successful bowhunter. □

Many hunters opt for too much magnification in their scopes. For most situations a straight 4x is all that's needed. Here's the scoop on . . .

Reticles and Magnification

DO YOU know anything about scopes?" an elderly hunter asked when we met by an abandoned oil well. "This one is so hazy it's almost impossible to see through. I haven't hunted for years, and this rifle belongs to a friend," he told me as he handed me his rifle and took mine. While I was examining the scope, he said that mine was clear and bright and had a cross thing in it. After a minute of looking through his 4-12x scope, I saw that the parallax adjustment on the objective lens was set at zero. I turned it to the 100-yard mark, and that was a start.

The biggest surprise, however, was discovering that the ocular lens (eyepiece) was almost ready to fall off. It had been screwed back to within the last two or three threads on the end of the tube. Taking a few moments to turn the eyepiece in, a fairly small dot appeared, looking sharp and black. He was amazed how easy it was to see through the scope, but he still had difficulty seeing the reticle. I explained to

him that this particular scope was set up primarily for woodchuck hunting, and that a small dot is a poor choice in a big game scope. I explained that there were other types of reticles designed for big game hunting and that large dots also worked well, but they had to be large. He was also some-



A COMPACT SCOPE like this discontinued Redfield 1-4x is a wise choice for hunting in thick cover, and it's a good fit for a compact, short action rifle.

what taken back with my answer about what power scope he should buy for a new big game rifle.

"Frankly, if you hunt in heavy cover, the 4-12x is a poor choice," I said. "For thick cover, a fixed 4x is the wisest choice, and a 2-7x variable is ideal for general big game hunting."

"You mean all I need is a four power scope," he said. "There's not a four power scope in our camp. All my buddies are using scopes with high magnification."

"That might be true, but they aren't hunting all the time in heavy timber. Here, I'll show you what I mean."

I turned the power ring to 12 and told him to quickly pick out a washtub size rock about 50 yards away. He twisted and turned for a full 15 seconds before he could see the rock. I turned the power ring to 4 and asked him to find the rock. As you might have guessed, he located it within a second or two. I also told him to leave the setting on 4 while he was in heavy brush and big timber and not to go to more than 7 when in clearings in the woods. For years I've used a 2½-7x Redfield, and I hunt a lot of abandoned stripmines, where 250-yard shots are common.

Usually, the scope purchaser puts the emphasis on power. Variables with wide power ranges such as 4-12x or 4-16x have an appeal most buyers can't resist, but with all the hoopla about the need for power, the truth is that a simple 4x is more than adequate for all types of Pennsylvania big game hunting. Although I use a 2½-7x, I stick with the lowest power in the woods. I might go to 7x when hunting in open country where 250-yard shots are possible.

A paramount point that many big game shooters overlook is that a scope is strictly for shooting, not for game searching, which is a binocular's job. The idea of having a 4-12x so the high magnification can be used for spotting is not only unwise but also unsafe. It's a chilling sensation to discover a hunter looking at you through his scope. Admittedly, once a game animal has been identified, the scope can be used to see if it's legal. For all practical purposes, though, a 4x or 2-7x will plainly show even small antlers at normal shooting ranges. Most of us are obsessed with power, and we often buy much more than we will ever use.

One fellow asked me why I opposed his choosing a 4-12x scope for his Marlin .444 lever action rifle. For one thing, the .444 is a short range cartridge, at home in deep timber and heavy brush. While it's true a 4-12x can be used at its lowest power, some-

thing along the lines of a 1.5-5x is more logical. These low range variables don't have much bulk and work well in heavy cover.

My basic reason for suggesting low power scopes for brush shooting is not their compactness, it's the wide field of view and the ease of seeing through them under poor conditions that make these ideal for close-up shooting. For instance, the 1.5-6x Simmons Whitetail Expedition offers a field of view of around 72 feet at the 1.5x setting, and 19 feet at 6x. Few hunters can effectively use a field of view even that small, particularly when shooting at close, running game.

The response to these suggestions is always the same: A 3-9x can be used at the 3x setting, so what's wrong with it? Actually, nothing, except the scope is bulkier and powers more than 4x are rarely needed. The man with the 4-12x on his Marlin lever action unquestionably had a good scope, but a lower power variable would have cut down the bulk and would have been easier to use. That's a fact.

A reticle is the aiming point in a scope. I'm not sure what type of reticle the first rifle scopes used, but it probably was the crosshair or crosswire type. I'm as guilty as the rest of the gun writing crowd by calling the crosswire the crosshair. Maybe, in essence, neither term is technically correct. Some claim early scopes used the crosswire in the form of an "X," and I recall at least two rifles that had scopes turned a little counterclockwise to make the crosswire form an X. One I corrected, but the owner of the other said that was the way the reticle should look. I told him it would be nearly impossible to zero the rifle. Well, it didn't take all day, but I used about three times as many cartridges.

Many styles of reticles have been used, but all of them, in one form or another, are spin-offs from the dot, post or crosswire. Some scope manufacturers offered an array of reticles that hinged on the crosswire and included double or triple wires,

crosswire with dot in center, crosswire with heavy post running up to the intersection of the crosswire, and a plain circle instead of a dot.

The duplex reticle is pretty much standard today, and it's known by a variety of names such as Plex, 4-Plex, Multi-X and Quadruplex. Basically, it's a crosswire type with thick wires running in from the edges of the field of view and changing to thin wires near the intersection. The theory behind this is that the thick crosswires are easy to see even in bad light and the thin wires at the intersection offer precise aiming, even at small targets or for shooting groups at the range.

The dot reticle is making a comeback in a variety of forms, and the most famous is probably the T. K. Lee "Tackhole" dot. Multi dots on the lower vertical wire eliminate the need for holding above the target on long shots. Schmidt & Bender's 4-16x varmint scope incorporates its #8 Varmint Reticle, which has five dots below the intersection dot. The rifle is zeroed in at 100 yards with the center dot, and the shooter can use the same sight picture with the first dot below the center dot and measure how high it is above the first group. By doing this with all five dots, it's easy to figure out at what distance each dot is zeroed for with that particular load combination. There is no need to guess how high to hold. Simply estimate the distance to the target and select the correct dot.

Despite all that a dot reticle has to offer, it is still misunderstood. As mentioned earlier, many people mistakenly buy a dot that is too small for the game hunted. Dot size is determined by the area it covers (subtends) at 100 yards, and a tiny dot simply can't be seen on moving targets. When I mentioned using a dot that covers a 5- or 6-inch area on a deer at 100 yards for a customer's 1½-5x scope on a .300 Savage, he laughed out loud. He claimed it was the most ridiculous statement he had ever



ED SPANGLER JR., Dover, got this deer in York County on the first Saturday of the 2001 season. Having a scope reticle he's familiar with enabled him to place an accurate shot in thick cover like that in the background.

heard. He was opting for a dot no larger than a half-inch to use in heavy brush for precise aiming.

I gave him a Sporter varmint rig that had a scope with a 1/4-inch dot. On my range, he was unable to instantly place the dot on a tin can 50 yards away. He admitted he couldn't find the small dot, and that was at a stationary target. He saw the light.

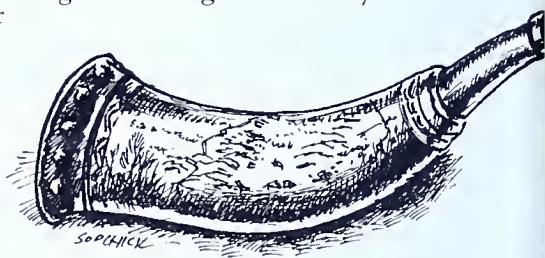
Lee's dot is placed on thin crosswires that seem to disappear, leaving the dot floating in the center of the field of view. Because my eyes are not the best, Michael O'Donnell at Lee suggested using a 1½-inch dot on a T-6 Weaver scope for squirrel hunting. That may surprise a lot of squirrel hunters, but at 50 yards the dot covers around 3/4-inch, which fits nicely on a squirrel's ribcage or chest. When ordering dots, the power of the scope must be taken into consideration. The best advice is to discuss your problem with O'Donnell. After installing more than a half million of them, no one knows more about dots than T. K. Lee, and that's worth considering. □

Fun Game answers: wild garlic; catnip.

Scrimshaw

LATE WINTER, 1762. Large, wet flakes fall straight down in the windless woods. A longhunter snugs down the greasy cow's knee that protects the flintlock action of his longrifle. The rifle is carved in a relief of wandering vines sprouting tendrils of inlaid silver wire, and the patchbox is engraved with the cycle of a waxing and waning moon. His powderhorn is scrimshawed with the storied map of his days, as is his weathered face.

He follows a pair of braided deer tracks leading over a ridge into newly charted country, the fringe of a vast forest of enormous chestnut and poplar, cherry, beech and oak. The diffused light of late afternoon reflects falsely from above, and he thinks perhaps he walks in the light of another time that lingers here from days when no man such as himself or any man hunted these fabled woods. The longhunter's gut pinches with hunger, and he dreads the thought of another meager supper of gritty johnnycake and jerky so tough and contorted it resembles crude utensils more than food.



He slides among the great trunks, casting no shadow, making no sound. The snow eases to a few errant flakes and he rests on one knee, trying to conjure a deer among the tawny trunks of a windfall. His thumb crooked on the hammer of the flintlock seems more a fleshy extension of the hammer itself than thumb, poised there always as it is, ready to set in motion the awesome power of the rifle — and this he does when a bedded deer stands, shaking a blanket of snow from its back. At the shot the deer's legs scissor, front then hind, and it collapses into its bed as if it had suddenly decided to rest again. The hunter emerges from the cloud of riflesmoke like some lesser god surveying for life or death or blood on the snow.

While dressing out the deer he notes that the curious topography of the entrails is not unlike that of these very hills — undulating hillocks, gentle hollows, domed mountains, deep clefts — a landscape within as well as without. As he works, steam rises from the laddered ribs and mixes with the vapor of his own breath like kindred spirits united, ascending then as one.

The hunter sits within the half shell of a stump, turning a skewer of loin slices on the small, tight fire before him. When the meat chars slightly he begins to eat, his stomach snatching each offering like a greedy hand. Ever vigilant, he watches the gloomy gaps between the trees and listens for the odd sound beyond the crackling flames.

As one would make an entry in a journal, he scrimshaws a copse of tall trees onto his powderhorn and marks the date. Soon he nods, luxuriating with the sublime satisfaction known only to a hunter with a full belly before a fire, the howling world held momentarily at bay.

-Bob Sopechick

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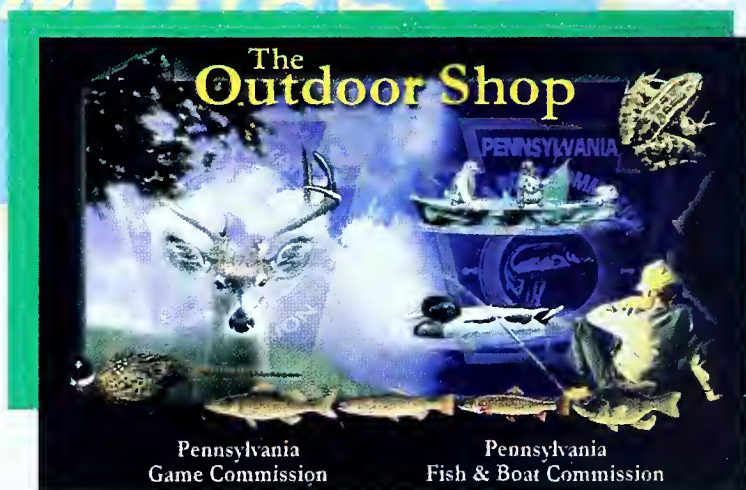
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PENNSYLVANIA GAME NEWS (ISSN 0031-451X) is published monthly for \$12 per year, \$34.50 for three years, or membership in Pennsylvania's Cooperative Farm-Game Project or Safety Zone Project; to Canada and all other foreign countries, \$13 U.S. currency, per year. Published by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Phone (717) 787-4250. Periodicals postage paid at Harrisburg, Pa. CHANGE OF ADDRESS: POSTMASTER: Send both old and new addresses to Pennsylvania Game News, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Allow six weeks for processing. Material accepted is subject to our requirements for editing and revising. Author payment covers all rights and title to accepted material, including manuscripts, photographs, drawings and illustrations. No information contained in this magazine may be used for advertising or commercial purposes. Opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Copyright © 2002 by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, an Equal Opportunity Employer, the programs of which are all administered consistent with the goals and objectives of Affirmative Action. All rights reserved.

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Newsstand consultant, Celtic Moon Publishing, 1-877-730-6263



PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

www.pgc.state.pa.us

Do Something Wild

“DO SOMETHING WILD,” Pennsylvania’s state income tax checkoff program to benefit nongame wildlife, was created in 1983, and since then, much has been done not only to protect and manage nongame animals — and native wild plants — but to also make all Pennsylvanians more aware of how valuable our state’s rich natural diversity is. Unfortunately, the fund has fallen upon lean financial times, but you can help, particularly now at tax time.

Through the fund, ospreys, river otters and fishers have been reintroduced to the state, and an abandoned church that houses the state’s largest maternal bat colony has been purchased. A comprehensive survey of breeding birds was done, and a similar survey of Pennsylvania’s native plants is going on. And these are just some of the major accomplishments made possible through the Wild Resource Conservation Fund. In addition to many other projects, the fund has also supported the development of educational programs and a host of other informational and educational materials for students and adults.

A problem that has plagued our state income tax checkoff since the beginning is that the Wild Resource Conservation Fund has never enjoyed adequate, reliable financial support, and the future of the fund is bleak. Like nongame programs in many other states, the fund was set up to be supported through the voluntary donations of state income tax refunds. But due to Pennsylvania’s fixed rate income tax structure, relatively few taxpayers receive refunds.

The Fund got a significant shot in the arm in 1993, when the saw whet owl license plate (the first specialty plate in the state) was offered. Around 250,000 were sold, earning \$3.5 million for the fund. And again, in 1999, the river otter plate became available and 35,000 river otter plates brought in \$500,000.

Historically, through tax-form donations, the fund averaged \$350,000 a year. In 2001, that fell to \$141,000. Other, competing, checkoff programs have been a factor, aggravated recently, it seems, from the increased use of electronic filings. Figures suggest that electronic tax filers, in particular, are less likely to make contributions. Whatever the reason, for the first time in the fund’s history, no fund money was used this past year to support field research projects, which are fundamental to the entire effort.

The Wild Resource Conservation Fund depends on all of us to “Do Something Wild,” to show our support for efforts to protect our state’s natural heritage. Your support can make a difference for the species that have been overlooked in the past.

This year, if you’re getting a state income tax refund, consider donating it to the fund. If you don’t get a refund, but would still like to make a contribution, send it to WRCE, P.O. Box 8764, Harrisburg, PA 17105-8764. — *Bob Mitchell*

letters

Editor:

My February issue is as poor a copy of publishing as I have ever seen. It's the second time in a year that I have received a copy with missing pages and double pages, or with much of the magazine cut off. Readers deserve magazines in much better condition. The magazine is too good to be put together in such poor condition.

J. RAINES
BATH

We've been working with our printer to rectify these sorts of problems. Printing as many copies of Game News as we do, however, with printing presses so much faster than they were only a decade or so ago, flawed copies are inevitable. While we'll continue to provide the best quality magazine as possible, we'll gladly replace any magazine received in poor condition.

Editor:

Thanks for the early doe season for physically challenged hunters. It was so nice to be hunting in the warmer weather, and I was able to get my first deer since 1995.

J. T. HENDRICKS
GROVE CITY

Editor:

For the past three years, a good friend from Oslo, Norway, has visited our mountain home for deer season, and last year, he got his first deer. Imagine our surprise, when upon field-dressing his deer, out popped a golf ball, in perfect shape.

In the summers, we hit golf balls in the field behind our home, and we try to retrieve them all, but this is one we obviously missed. It sure gave us all a good laugh, though, and it's now on display with our antlers.

J. ROBINSON
LAWTON

Editor:

We enjoy *Game News* and my husband is an avid hunter. In fact, since 1979, he has gotten five bears in Pennsylvania. Are there others who have gotten this many? Keep up the good work of informing all Pennsylvanians.

B. HINES
MARIANNA

So, are there?

Editor:

This past year I was fortunate in getting a bear. Alone, I was able to move the bear only about 300 yards to a road. I called to another hunter, who came over and helped me drag the bear some more, then a few other hunters showed up and allowed me to borrow their cart, which was used to get the bear the mile and a half out to my truck. I did not get to thank any of them, but I sure am grateful for their help. They showed a true spirit of sportsmanship. At the check station I learned the bear weighed, dressed, 230 pounds.

E. SAVARD
THOMASVILLE

Editor:

Don Feigert's "Aficionados of the Woodlands," in the January issue, deserves a wider audience. Among his many valuable points, the one that stands out is that the environment is everybody's business. Nonhunters concerned about the environment should be on the same side as the hunters concerned about wildlife habitat. It's potentially tragic that people who, in fact, have common cause fail to join together, and it is not always "the other guy" who fails to see the light.

Mr. Feigert is also right in that we need a steady and reliable funding source to protect the environment, and that funding should come from all stakeholders. We should work to have CARA reintroduced and passed.

Finally, delighted to see Chuck Fergus is writing for *Game News* again.

C. A. CRAWFORD
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

Editor:

The warm weather this past hunting season got me to wondering what a deer's body temperature is. Do you know?

A. J. DI MAGGIO
VERONA

The body temperature of a white-tailed deer is 102 degrees, but it can range from 100 to, in diseased or stressed deer, 107 degrees.

Your comments are welcome. Mail them to "Letters," 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Letters will be edited for brevity and clarity.



If ever your aging heart feels a little empty, in need of fulfillment and rejuvenation, sharing your knowledge about nature, conservation and hunting with a young person brings rewards beyond imagination. And the knowledge you've shared will make for a better human being.

The Sacrificial Luminary

By Joe Parry

AT 60, he was not an old man, and anyway, to him, a hunter is not judged by a passage of years, but rather by the time spent in the lair of the whitetail. The man had a little Native American blood, Cherokee, running through his veins, and his great grandfather died on the infamous "Trail of Tears." Hunting partners were amazed at his furtiveness, his prowess, his woods lore, and his unique reverence for wild places, wild things and nature.

Everything on God's sacred earth, according to the old luminary, is related. According to his ancestors, life is but a great circle. He'd tell how the moon, sun, earth, planets and stars are round. Even the birds build their nests in a circle, and man's life is a large circle, starting at childhood and returning to childhood.

The old man's circle, however, was closing far too fast, and with great regret. After several heart attacks, his heart was damaged, but oh how he loved life. All of it, "even the many hard times he had to painfully endure," he once said while looking at the woodlot across from his old home in the Big Woods. He was a man of tremendous compassion for all living things. He was a man of unparalleled generosity and did the right things even when no one was looking. He's the perfect example of an anachronism, a man who didn't fit into modern times. He should have been a mountain man or a Lakota Sioux hunter on the Great Plains.

He felt very strongly about leaving something of himself behind — a legacy. He felt he could not leave this great earth without teaching someone else how to take care of Father Sky, Mother Nature and her children. It all meant too much to him. He felt that many people took nature too much for granted. Wild places that grow ever smaller each minute, as cement, asphalt and buildings replace them.

The man thought about how he taught his son and daughter about conservation and to appreciate nature, but that wasn't enough; he had to teach others, so he chose two young men who he felt had a general respect for nature. All he had to do was hone that respect to where they'd never forget, and enhance it to where they felt a responsibility that would forever live within them. Then they, too, would carry on the legacy. That way the old man would never fully die, nor would his beloved wild places become only a dream; some would remain unspoiled because of his students.

These young men would hunt deer with him. He would give them lessons subtly and accurately. They would learn without knowing he was teaching. They would learn that wisdom is far greater than knowledge, and without wisdom, knowledge is useless. It was his deepest hope that they would

add to what he would teach, and to share the lessons with their children, and their children's children.

The two pupils were Matthew and Jeffrey. They were "his" for the autumn, his for teaching, his to lead by example. The man wore a "medicine bag" around his neck that was his good luck piece, and he gave Matthew and Jeffrey each a necklace of buckhorn. "For luck," he said. "Young people need little things like this to sort of boost their confidence."



He walked with the young men many times, but separately, to the woods across from his home and began by saying, "The first thing you must do when you enter God's forests is pray. Thank Him for the day, ask Him to share his bounty. Assure Him you will be grateful for all that transpires, but that honestly, you are not in dire need. Always be truthful with Him and yourself. You must not just visit the forest, you must become one with it."

The old man told his young hunters he would not take a buck on opening day if it appeared to be heading toward one of them. Although deer hunting was his most sacred endeavor, he would sacrifice his "success" for his students. For he'd also taught them that killing isn't the only ingredient for a successful hunt — or even one of the ingredients — there is much more. More important things the

young men would one day deem sacred and precious. Things, he hoped, they would learn on their own. Killing would become the bonus of their days afield, but certainly not the foremost ingredient for that which they truly sought: the heart-filling peace, wonder and joy found in the outdoors.

Sleep on the Saturday night before opening day was hopeless, and early Sunday morning the man sat with a cup of coffee, watching the field across from his house. He hoped, even prayed, he'd see a buck to tell the boys about on Sunday evening, just one little buck he could tell them about to excite them.

As he drank his coffee and thumbed through a book he continued to watch the edge of the woods across the road at the high end of a large meadow. Three deer soon appeared in the mowed portion. By golly, I hope those rascals hang out there till I can get these old binoculars to gather enough light to make out what they are, he thought. He stood there holding the binoculars until his arms began to tire and shake. In due time there was enough daylight to scrutinize the three deer, now at the edge of a pine thicket, ready to enter and bed for the morning. He couldn't believe it. Were all three of those critters sporting antlers?

The Creator was generous, because all three had racks. And what most amazed him was that the rut was still on — not in high gear, but certainly still taking place. Those bucks should have been adversaries. The boys ain't gonna believe this, no matter what I swear on, he thought. One of the bucks was a dandy 6-point, another a 10-point, which he had seen before, and the third looked like a 4-point. He wondered if the boys would believe him when he told them about three bucks bunched together like grapes. He thought they would. Jeffrey and Matthew knew their old friend, their luminary, never told an untruth. Never in his lifetime, maybe just the occasional exaggeration for story effect.

When the opener arrived, he got the

boys off to their stands well before daylight, and told them that if they shot a buck to wait for him to get there, so he could help with field-dressing. He told them he'd recognize the sound of their rifles, to wait about 30 minutes and he'd be there.

While on his stand the old man thought how life is the greatest of gifts and that it should be opened up and shared with others. It warmed his heart to know he was sharing his hunt with the boys. At exactly 7:19 he heard a nearby shot. One he knew from the dull thud had hit a deer. He thought it was Jeff, so he walked toward his stand on a high bench. As he got close to where Jeff sat he opened his arms in a questioning gesture. Jeff shook his head. As it turned out, Jeff had seen the deer that was shot, but was unable to tell what it was. The old man and Jeff learned later that a neighbor had shot a plump 3-point about 150 yards below Jeff's stand. The man left Jeff with a hug and some confidence building words. He told him he was going to check on Matt and for him to stay put.

The old man came in silently on the ridge just above the bench Matt was watching. Matt spotted him and the man noticed an anxious look on his reddened face. Matt said he had shot a 6-point buck that came in real close at 7:20, but when he went to tag it, it jumped up, nearly knocking him over, and ran into the swamp just below his stand. Matt was about to get a tracking lesson from the old man. When the two hunters got to the end of a large birch plot they spotted the downed buck. The look in young Matt's eyes after spotting the buck was priceless.

Everything the man told those boys went exactly as he had said. It was wonderful that Matt got his deer, but disappointing that things didn't work out for Jeff, but the old man explained that that's the way hunting is.

Both boys had to be back at college. Matt said that the whole hunting experience was a dream come true. The old man doubted he'd be around for the boys' next

deer season, but he sure hoped so. He was certain the boys would cherish their first deer hunt with him, though, and never forget him.

The hunt meant a lot to the old hunter, too. Those young men didn't realize that the real gift of the hunting season was what they had given him. He knew his legacy would be carried on. A gift that would forever live in his heart and one he would carry to wherever it is old deer hunters go when they leave this fine earth.

"Yeppuree, Jeff and Matt, no matter how tough I've been on you boys with my cram course on deer hunting, you'll be thinkin' about me one day and say somethin' like, 'geez, that old rascal was a tough ol' bird, but because of him we came to know a happiness we might never have known,'" he told them.

Matt and Jeff now realize the value of an old luminary who sacrificed a lot of heart, even his sacred venison, so they could realize their dreams — at least Matt's at first. And just for the record the old man said, "Jeff will get his buck, sooner or later. And if I have to die by golly, I'd best do it helping this fine young man fill a dream. I'd hate for him to get his first buck after I'm gone. That's why I'm gonna take him out Saturday and push a buck right into his lap. He ain't gonna forget this old man, by golly. And the best way to get a kid to remember ya, is to take him hunting. I ain't leavin' those woods over yonder till Jeff gets a buck." Then he smiled as he remembered Matt's buck. They laughed together and all was good in the old luminary's heart. Well, now it's Jeffrey's turn at feeling real good, even though he was happy for Matt and his first buck. And sharing in the happiness of it all is what deer hunting is all about. Just ask the old luminary. I always tell the truth. □



Double Play Gobblers

By Doris Bickle

I'VE BEEN HUNTING for 30 years, and besides Pennsylvania, I've hunted turkeys in South Dakota, West Virginia and New York. And while I've enjoyed plenty of success, nothing compares to my 2000 season.

I had been scouting since early April and had located several gobblers. So, just before the season, I called my brother Ron, who lives in Lockport, New York, and my Uncle Merrill and my young nephew Keith, and told them what I had found and about our prospects for opening day.

On April 28 we all converged on Bear Camp near Pekin Run, just north of Brookville. Late that afternoon Keith and I went out to try to roost some turkeys. We spotted a flock with at least one gobbler, and then heard them fly up in some tall trees just before dark.

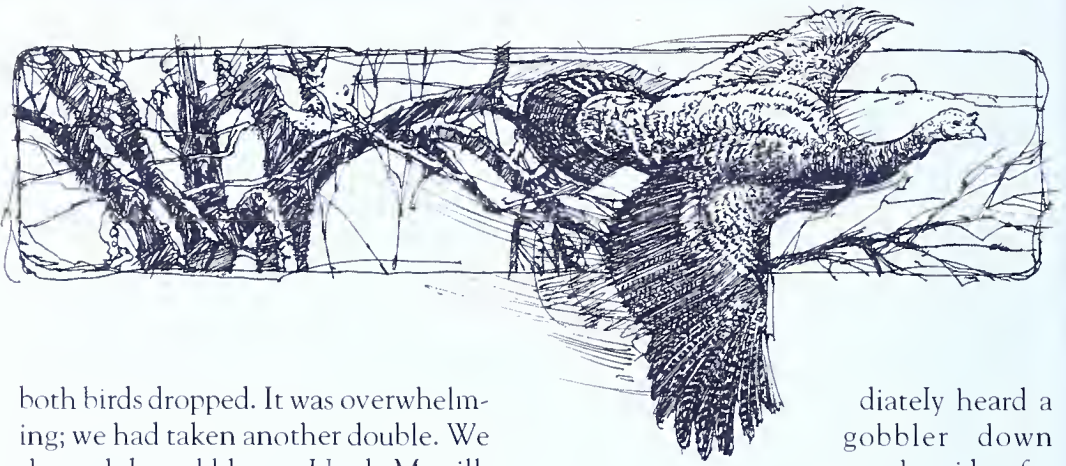
Back at camp Ron and Uncle Merrill reported that they also had roosted some birds, but after discussing the location, we discovered that they were the same birds we had put to bed. We decided to all hunt in the same area, confident that one of us would get a crack at the gobbler.

Uncle Merrill and I left camp at 4:45 the next morning. Ron is the best caller, so he took Keith, because he had never taken a turkey. By 5:30 the woods around Pekin Run reverberated with gobbling turkeys. At 6:25 I heard two shots that were almost simultaneous. Within a couple minutes Ron called me on his portable radio saying they had a turkey. Uncle Merrill and I went down and found Keith, who had a nice jake.

They told us that four jakes came off the ridge above them and both of them shot. Ron said that he was concentrating on Keith's bird and lost track of the one he had shot at and couldn't find it. We found where Ron's bird had been standing and noticed feathers on the ground. As we continued to look we found more feathers heading up the hill. I couldn't believe we were tracking a turkey by a feather trail. The farther we went, the more feathers we found. After several hours of tracking, Uncle Merrill pointed to a hemlock tree and we spotted the jake. A double on the first day made for an exciting time at camp that afternoon and evening.

On Sunday, Uncle Merrill, Ron and I headed for New York, where the gobbler season always begins on May 1. When we got there our friend Wally told us of a longbeard he had roosted on his property, and he said there were plenty of other turkeys around.

The next morning Ron and I went into the woods and Uncle Merrill set up near a field. At daybreak the woods were again filled with gobbling. Ron did some tree calls, and at 6:25 I spotted a jake coming up through the woods. As we watched and called, a second jake appeared right behind the first. Ron whispered that he thought we could double. As the birds worked closer, Ron asked if I had a clear shot and I said that I did. When he counted to three, both our guns boomed, and



both birds dropped. It was overwhelming; we had taken another double. We showed the gobblers to Uncle Merrill, and later that day we met up with Wally, who showed us his 21-pound gobbler with an 11-inch beard. He said at daybreak the bird pitched down from a tree and came right in. It had been another great opening morning.

On Tuesday morning, Uncle Merrill and I switched places. Ron took him and went to where we had scored the day before. Once again the gobbling activity at daybreak was brisk. At 6:15 I heard a shot, and a few minutes later Ron radioed to say that Uncle Merrill had taken a longbeard with $1\frac{3}{8}$ -inch spurs, and that was later weighed at 22 pounds. It had been another great hunt.

On Wednesday morning I was back in Pennsylvania, trying to fill my tag, but with no luck. After all that action early on, I was a little disappointed and concerned that my luck had run out. Later that day, however, I ran into a friend, Mark Siple, who would be leaving for Nicaragua with his National Guard unit on the following Monday. He invited me to hunt with him. I told him I would pick him up at 4:45 the following morning.

On Thursday morning I picked up Mark and we headed towards Sigel. Mark works at Clear Creek State Park, and he said there were a lot of turkeys in the area. We drove to the top of a ridge and got out to listen. We didn't hear anything, so I drove to another spot and we got out to listen. I imme-

diately heard a gobbler down over the side of a hill in some mountain laurel. This would make spotting a bird extremely difficult, but I thought maybe we could find an opening to see through. As we walked away from the road, the gobbling got louder. We were probably 125 yards off the road when Mark pointed and said he saw the bird going between some trees about 100 yards away. I looked around and could not find a good place to set up, and I knew we could not get any closer. I started calling with my box call, and the tom moved closer, gobbling all the way, but because of the laurel we just couldn't spot him. He circled to our left and then walked straight away. I was disheartened, because I wanted Mark to get a bird.

We hiked back to the truck and drove up the road about a half mile and came to a pipeline. I thought that maybe we had gotten ahead of the gobbler and could call him out onto the pipeline. We grabbed our guns, vests and decoy and headed out. I found a large oak to set up against, and Mark set up the decoy. I started clucking on my box call and the bird gobbled back. The tom was slowly moving our way, and it seemed like an eternity until he came into view. The bird came in on our left side, and I immediately noticed a nice beard. I have never taken a longbeard, and now I was calling one in for someone else.

At soon as the gobbler saw the decoy he went into full strut. I clucked on my call and he came in closer. I whispered to Mark that he was close enough, about 35 yards, and to shoot when he had a clear

shot. He fired and dropped the bird, which had a 10-inch beard and 1-inch spurs. I was so excited that I had called in the magnificent tom for Mark. We took him back to the Clear Creek Park Office to take photos.

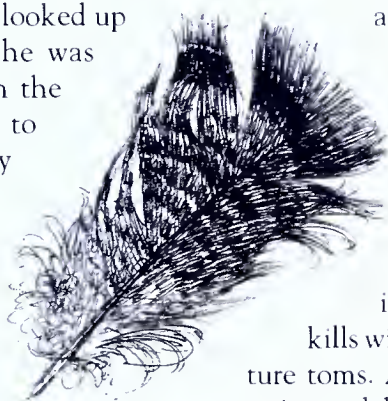
Mark said that we still had time to get my bird, so we took off again. We were driving down the road when Mark spotted a longbeard up in a field. I stopped the truck and backed up. We looked up through the woods but he was gone. We drove on down the road and discussed trying to call him in. I had my doubts, because it was now late in the morning, but we decided to give it a try. About 50 yards off the road we ran into a steep drop off, and we worked our way down and found a good place to set up. Mark put out the decoy and I got my mask and gloves on. Mark settled in behind me, and I got out my box call and started yelping. To my surprise the bird gobbled right back. I called some more and he continued gobbling and was getting closer. I handed the call to Mark, and told him he was going to have to call so I could shoot.

Mark whispered that he saw the bird on my left, and when I looked that way I spotted the tom, and then its long beard. The bird had climbed the bank that we had stumbled down earlier, and it had

turned and was now heading towards the road. Mark clucked on the call and the gobbler came back over to the side of the hill and looked down over. He was 40 yards away, and when I put my bead on his head and pulled the trigger, my Remington 870 knocked him backwards. I hurried to the bird and was elated to have taken my first

longbeard. Both Mark's tom and mine weighed about 18 pounds, and both had inch-long spurs. We couldn't have been happier.

I looked back on the spring season and realized that I had been involved in eight turkey kills with four of them being mature toms. Anyone who has not experienced hunting turkeys in the spring has not experienced the true wonders of the spring woods. Words cannot explain the jubilation one feels when a young hunter gets his first turkey, an older hunter gets a longbeard, or when you get a chance to double up on two toms with your brother, or when you call in not one but two longbeards in the same morning for a friend and yourself. Turkey hunting is something I'll look forward to for as long as I'm able to hunt, but I know I'll have a hard time matching all the excitement I enjoyed in 2000. □



COVER PAINTING BY KEN HUNTER

I'LL NEVER FORGET my first scarlet tanager sighting. One evening last summer a neighbor told me he had seen some around, and the next morning I was sipping tea in the dining room of our new home, gazing out the picture window into a mature oak woodlot when I noticed a brilliant red bird with jet-black wings land in a small opening 15 feet away and pluck a caterpillar from the ground. It struck me then that the male scarlet tanager was the most splendid bird I had ever seen, and my wife, who also got a good look at it, agreed. It's a shame that such a beautiful bird often goes unseen, because its usual summer hideaway is in a dense canopy of tall oaks, where it gleans insects from the foliage. About all one can hope for is a teasing glimpse of this "jewel" when it descends from the treetops.

Homework Buck

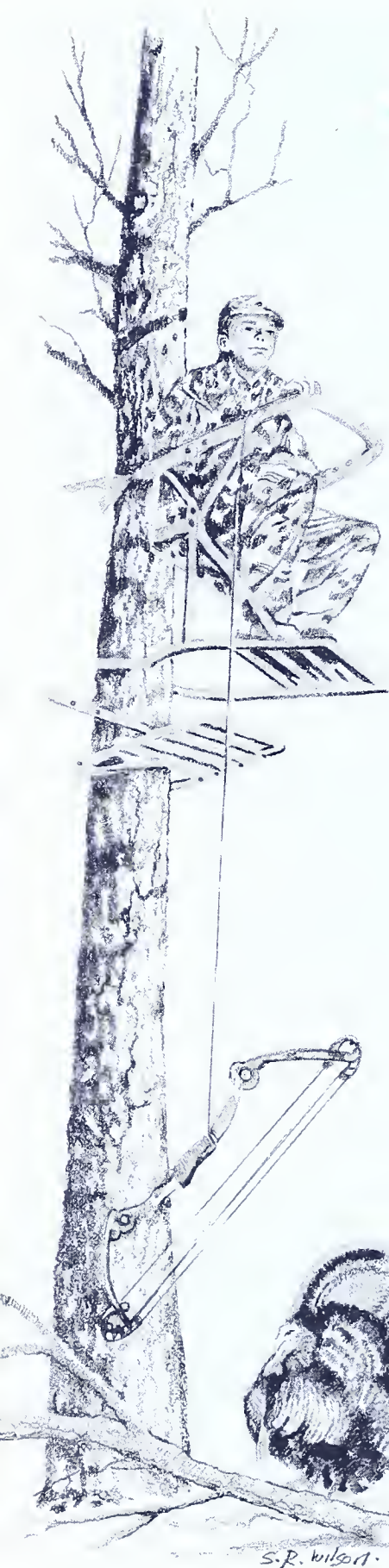
By Adam L. Bozick

TO GRADUATE from Uniontown Area High School I must complete two strict requirements: First, my grades need to be sufficient and, second, I have to complete a senior project. A senior project consists of something of educational value that began during my freshman year and results in a completed project during my senior year.

Being a huge fan of the outdoors, I figured the only way I could thoroughly enjoy such an assignment would be to involve hunting. It seemed obvious, then, that writing an article on a memorable hunting experience would be my completed work, which I would eventually present to the project committee. Now, selecting one outdoor experience posed a problem, because all of them seemed memorable. Throughout the years I've enjoyed many hunts, but I concluded that taking my first buck with a bow is my most cherished memory.

It was raining on Tuesday, November 2, 1999, and school was closed due to local elections. Instead of sleeping in, I had my alarm set for 5:30 and my mind set on taking a trophy buck. As luck would have it, my mother quietly crept into my bedroom and turned off the alarm. Luckily, around 6:50, the rain pounding against my window woke me up. Realizing I had slept in, I jumped out of bed and hopped into my clothes.

Prior to that morning, my father and I had selected a spot for a treestand in an area where



we had spotted a few nice bucks, and we had even secured a climbing stand around a tall oak at the spot. I quickly gathered all of my gear and headed off into the woods. Thanks to the wet conditions I reached my spot without making much noise at all, and after placing some buck lure on a nearby trail, I carefully climbed the tree, secured the stand, pulled up my remaining equipment and got completely situated for my wait in the rain. Fortunately, thanks to the rough bark of the oak, the stand was perfectly safe to use.

As daylight began to slowly trickle through the dark clouds, the wind and rain picked up. The tree my stand was in tottered back and forth in the wind, and I thought about ending my hunt. Around 9 o'clock a large limb crashed to the ground, which persuaded me to call it a day. Taking a rope from my pocket, I tied my bow and fanny pack together and lowered them to the ground. As they neared the earth, movement caught my eye, and I spotted three does standing 10 yards away. I chuckled about my bad luck.

Staring right at me, the lead doe stomped her foot, trying to get me to move. Eventually, I gave in to her cat-and-mouse game by standing up. The deer flashed their tails and bounded into a nearby crabapple thicket. With renewed enthusiasm I raised my bow back up, determined to stick it out.

About an hour later, powerful gusts began to shake the tree again. Then another large limb tumbled to the ground, landing within 10 yards of my stand. Common sense told me I should quit, and once again I attached my equipment to a rope and lowered it from my stand. Immediately after the bow hit the ground I noticed a flock of turkeys picking their way toward me. Much to my surprise, the birds passed underneath me with no suspicion. Eventually, the flock wandered off, and for the second time, I retrieved my bow and continued the hunt. At that point I vowed to buckle down and remain in my stand for the remainder of the day.

By 10:30 I was soaked to the bone, but all thoughts about how uncomfortable I was left when I caught a glimpse of antler. Slowly turning my head I spotted a nice buck. The deer, nose to the ground, zigzagged in my direction. Never stopping, the buck continued through a briar patch until it reached my buck lure. It stopped and offered a perfect broadside shot at 17 yards. My heart raced and I forced myself to concentrate on the task at hand. I locked my release, drew the bow and tried to forget about the buck's antlers. I focused on a clump of ruffled hairs directly behind the shoulder, and before I knew it, the Easton 2213 with a 100-grain Rocket broadhead flew toward my target. An echoing thud indicated a good hit. The buck's tail dropped and he bounded through the thicket. After sprinting just 40 yards, he crashed to the ground while in mid-stride.

I was in total disbelief. How in the world could I have harvested a buck? Bad luck seemed to be the only type of luck I encountered while hunting. After pinching myself several times to make sure I wasn't dreaming, I realized that 55 yards was all that stood between my first buck and me.

Despite waiting a while to settle down, I was still so excited that descending the tree was difficult. As I headed towards the buck, the closer I got, the harder it seemed to breathe. After making sure the deer was dead, I grasped the magnificent rack: a 9-point. Adrenaline completely controlled all of my actions from that point on. Tagging and field-dressing the deer presented a problem because my fingers would not function properly, but somehow I completed the process. I then dragged the buck to a road and walked home.

I immediately called my father at work to tell him the fantastic news.

He told me to call our friend, Mr. Packan, so that he could assist me with the deer. An avid hunter, he eagerly drove over to the house to lend a hand. While I waited, two of my friends, Garrett Brain and Tim Mahoney, stopped over and asked about my morning hunt. In great detail, I told my story, but neither believed the tale until they actually saw the deer.

Once Mr. Packan arrived, all of us piled into his truck and drove back to my buck. Moments later, we were met by my father, who used his lunch break to come home.

After admiring my buck for about 10 minutes, we loaded it into the bed of my father's pickup and drove back

to the house.

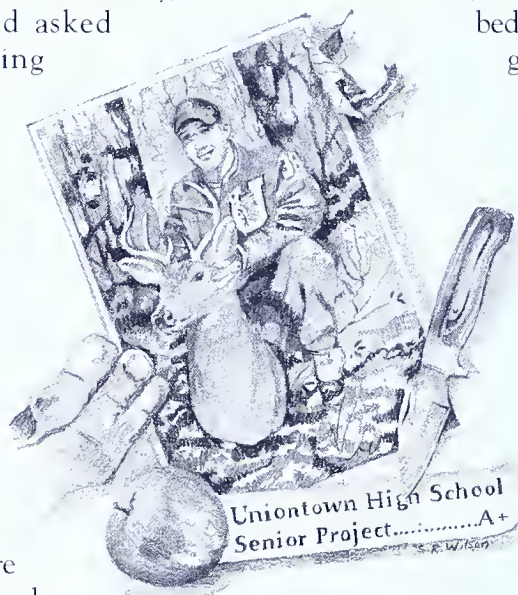
I had the buck mounted, and for some reason my sister, Amy, named the mount Morton. To this day, I still don't know how she came up with that name, but it stuck.

Now, Morton hangs over my bed, and every night before going to sleep, I'm reminded of that glorious rainy day.

Writing this article has been the most enjoyable homework assignment I've ever received. Calculus would take on a whole new twist if it involved a treestand, the woods, and an inspired student.

Oh yeah, I just want to extend my gratitude to

Morton for giving me the opportunity to stand proudly with the Uniontown Area High School Class of 2002 and receive my diploma. □



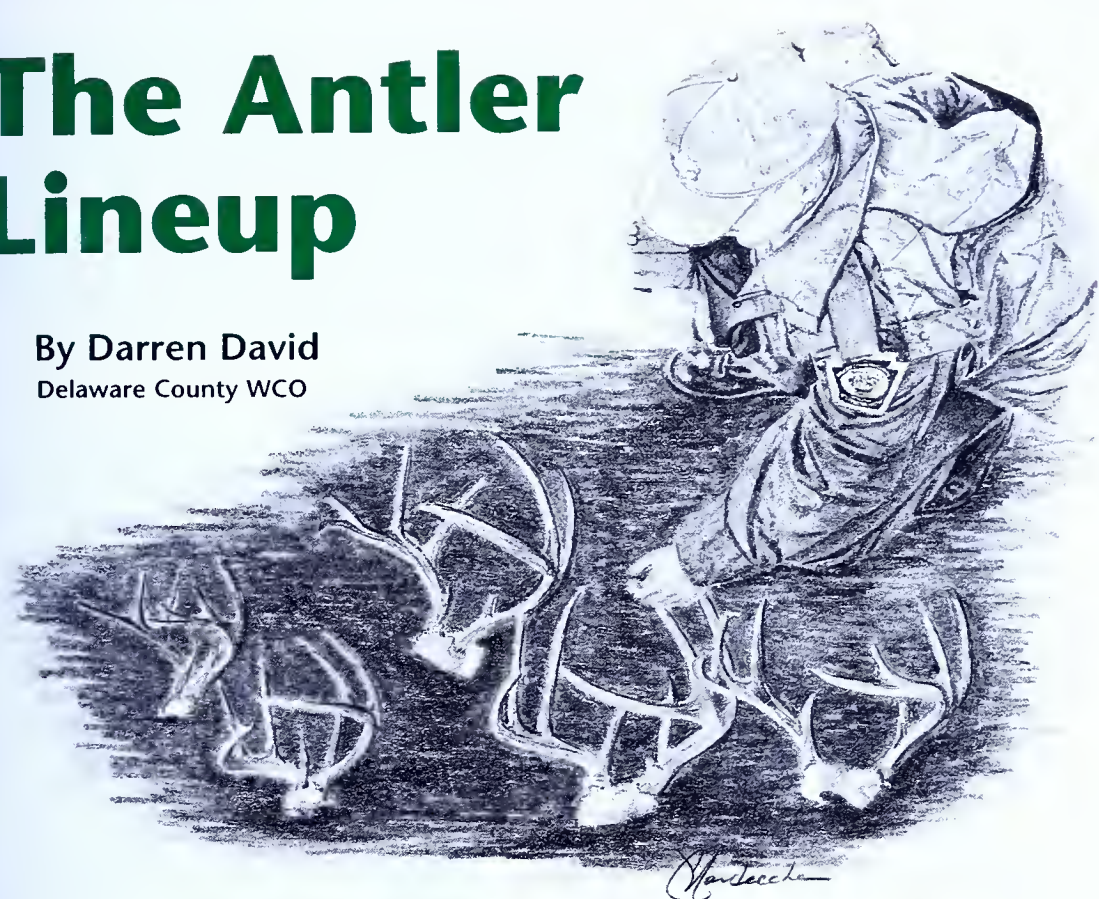
Days of Yore



THESE DEER were taken in 1948 by members of the York County Dutchman's Hunting Club. The club was organized in 1939 and is still in existence today. Club secretary DOUGLAS BAUBLITZ says there are five surviving charter members.

The Antler Lineup

By Darren David
Delaware County WCO



IT WAS an early evening in September, a few days before archery season. I had finished working for the day and was looking after my young son when my office phone rang. As usual, despite being “off the clock,” I couldn’t help answering it. It was the region office dispatcher, calling to tell me someone had reported a poaching incident near Chadds Ford. My adrenaline kicked in as I grabbed a pen to write down the information.

Two hunters scouting for archery season heard a gunshot. They were at the edge of a woodlot bordering a cornfield when the shot came from a road on the bottom of a wooded hillside near the other end of the field. They hurried across the field toward the shot and found a most impressive 9-point buck, dead. They could barely make out a dark colored vehicle moving slowly up and down the road, but they couldn’t get a good description of it much less a license plate number. One of the sportsmen had a cell phone and immediately called the region office.

As soon as I got all the information I needed from the dispatcher, I called the witness on his cell phone and he filled me in on what had happened. Unable to leave my son, I made arrangements with deputies Bill Cosenza and Tony Houser to meet the witnesses.

Before they had left, the witnesses hid the buck in the cornfield, but by the time they led the deputies back to the deer, about a half hour later, it was gone. Also, except for the blood on the ground, there was no evidence. With nothing else to go on, the witnesses and deputies left discouraged.

About a week later a local taxidermist called. A man had been in his shop, noticed a 9-point rack on the counter, and remarked that it looked like one a friend of his had mentioned being poached near Chadds Ford. The taxidermist explained that the rack had been brought in by a guy from Delaware, where the season had be-

gun a couple weeks earlier, and that it was properly tagged. The rack was so distinctive, though, that the taxidermist gave me a call.

Knowing the chances of two big 9-points looking so similar — and, as it turned out, allegedly killed on the same day — my suspicions were aroused, too. I went to the taxidermist and borrowed the 9-point rack brought in by the guy from Delaware. Then I scrounged up several other big 9-point racks and made plans

with the witnesses to see if they might recognize the rack from the deer they had found in the cornfield. One witness agreed to meet me right away, and after I got all the racks out of my vehicle he immediately picked out the one I had taken from the taxidermist shop. He pointed out several unique features that he clearly remembered. Besides its large size, it had bowed-in tines at the top, one of which branched like a crab claw. Right below that fork the main beam had a rather prominent groove in it. The witness was certain that the rack had come from the deer he had found shot to death in the cornfield.

A few days later, Tony and Bill took the rack lineup and met with the other witness. After showing him the collection of 9-points, he also fingered the one in question.

At this point I felt I had a good case, albeit circumstantial. It was time to call the Delaware Fish and Game Department. One of their officers, John Webb, drove to the suspect's home to interview him. The suspect, predictably, denied killing the deer in Pennsylvania; he was adamant that he had taken it lawfully in Delaware. I got the same response when I inter-

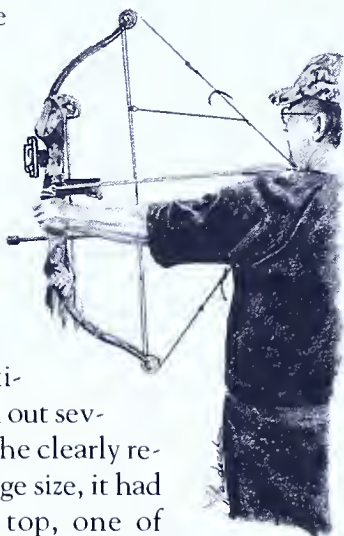
viewed him, so within a few days I filed a citation, charging him with the possession of an unlawfully taken deer.

The suspect immediately said he wanted a hearing, and I knew I had an uphill battle in proving his guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. I knew he was guilty, because the chances of two 9-point bucks having the same specific rack characteristics were astronomical, not to mention that they had allegedly been killed on the same day and not really that far from one another. Convincing a judge of those odds, however, one

not familiar with deer biology and hunting, might be quite challenging. I would have only the one witness who could link the defendant to the crime — the one who remembered the rack well. Even with one convincing witness and proof that the days matched up, I needed something else to validate the factors that would be crucial for the case.

That something else would be an expert witness. I called one of our deer biologists, Bret Wallingford. He agreed to come down for the hearing.

When the day of the hearing arrived, about five months after the incident, I proceeded with my case. I brought Deputy Cosenza to the stand to testify about what had happened when he and Deputy Houser responded that evening. I then called my witness, who was convincing in his testimony that the antlers I brought in to court belonged to the deer he had found. He also verified that he picked the same rack out of my "lineup." Finally, Bret took the stand and gave testimony that every deer's antlers are equivalent to a fingerprint in their uniqueness, and that the particular antlers brought in the courtroom were notably unique. He confirmed that the odds of there being two deer such as the one in question were extremely slim.



I found it strange that the defense lawyer did not cross-examine any of my witnesses. I wondered what he had up his sleeve. When he began his defense I sat back and smiled, because I knew where he was heading. I let him go on about how I could not prove his client was in Chadds Ford on the evening in question, or that he had ever shot a deer with a firearm. He even brought in a bloody arrow and photos of the defendant posing with his deer, claiming it was killed in Delaware.

It was then time for closing arguments, and I said I didn't intend to prove the defendant shot the deer with a firearm, or that he was even at the scene of the offense. All I had proven was that the deer he possessed, the one he brought to the Pennsylvania taxidermist, was taken unlawfully in Pennsylvania. If I could prove

he was at the scene, and that he had shot the buck from a vehicle and from the road, then several more charges would have been filed as a result of those activities. The defendant was found guilty. To my surprise, though, he appealed to a higher court and was, unfortunately, found not guilty.

After this long process I realized that no one had won. If the guilty verdict had stuck, several hundred dollars would have been gone into the Game Fund to be used to benefit wildlife. Instead, the person I charged with an illegal deer undoubtedly spent several times the amount of the fine on a lawyer, and law-abiding hunters and the public were cheated as a result of the illegal and unethical killing of a trophy whitetail. □

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The Pennsylvania Long Rifle

By Dave Ehrig

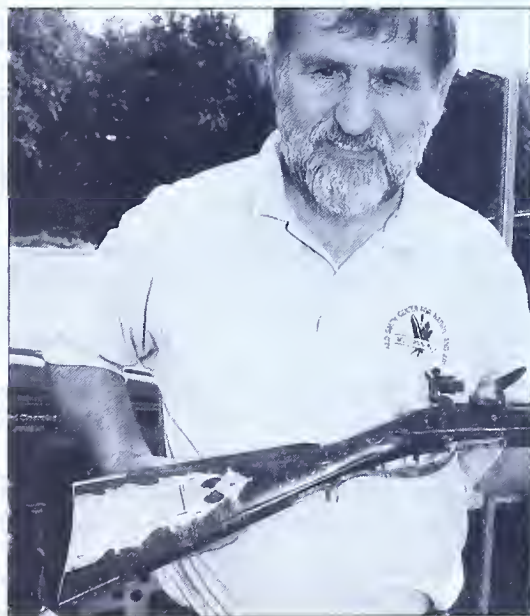
IN 1710 and again in 1730, two waves of German immigrants moved into the huge valleys between the Delaware and Susquehanna rivers. Many were indentured servants to English masters, others sold most of their worldly goods for safe passage. The flintlock gun of Europe was one tool that was considered a necessity, though, and was carried across the Atlantic. Flintlock in ignition, smooth of bore — so as to shoot buckshot or a round ball — it was a utilitarian piece used for securing food for the table, and hides for clothing, shoes and harnesses.

Frontier tools such as axes, saws, as well as flintlock rifles, were used regularly and hard. Repairs were frequent and settlers were always looking for ways to make their lives easier. Hunters quickly noticed that the German “Jaegar” (hunter) rifle and the longer-barreled Swiss Mountain Rifle were more accurate and hit with more authority than the old Schimmel (horse) smoothbore. The German, Scots-Irish and French Huguenot immigrants, who later became a melting pot known as the Pennsylvania Dutch, sought out local gunsmiths and demanded improvements. Martin Meylin, a Swiss gunsmith in the Pequea Valley of

southern Lancaster County, provided a new type of rifle. Foremost in their imagination was a rifle that was capable of hitting a deer-size target at a hundred yards. Jaegers could do that, but their slow loading procedure of swaging larger caliber, over bore-sized round balls down the barrel was both expensive and bothersome to a frontiersman. From such humble beginnings, a new rifle emerged.

The evolution of the Pennsylvania Long Rifle commenced in four centers of frontier-farm communities. This was probably a result of the water powered iron forges. One found near Lancaster (Old Hickory Town) was on the Pequea Creek. There at the Catelin Forge, pig iron billets were heated and hammered in strips known as “gun scallops.” Another barrel making center was in Berks County’s “Schmutz Deich,”

HOWARD OESTERLING, Project Chairman for the Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art, shows off the Long Rifle that will be raffled off on July 27, 2002 at the Ned Smith Wildlife Festival.



or "Greasy Valley," along the Wyomissing Creek. The Little Lehigh Creek in Lehigh County provided energy for several forges to supply iron for early gunsmiths in the Allentown/Bethlehem area, as well as in Christian Springs to the north, near Bath. All of these pre-Revolution gunsmiths shared the ability to bore smaller-calibered long barrels with slow twist rifling. The longer barrels generated greater velocities for the slow burning black powder, about 10 feet per second per inch beyond a typical 26-inch barrel. It also gave a side benefit of a longer sighting plane for the open iron sights. Both of these American improvements increased accuracy, just as did the invention of the greased, patched round ball. Pennsylvania Rifles soon became legendary for their accuracy. Original pre-Revolutionary War Pennsylvania Rifles were utilitarian tools, but the demand for rifles during and after the war caused a huge competition among gunsmiths.

One of the first purely American improvements to the flintlock rifle was the replacement of the wooden patchbox lid with a hinged brass patchbox. More than a secure compartment for storing ramrod jags, patches, lubricant, prayer scripts (in case the "longhunter" farmer died in the forests during one of his winter hunting/trapping forays), and a silver bullet (the only thing that could kill a witch) these new two- and four-piece patchboxes now carried folk art designs of daisy, horse, eagle, star and heart motifs.

The golden age of Pennsylvania Long Rifles evolved at the hands of gunsmiths from about 1776 to 1825. The masters in Lancaster, Allentown/Bethlehem, Womelsdorf-Reading, Lebanon, Dauphin, York, Littlestown, Emmitsburg and Chambersburg schools of long rifle styles trained them as apprentices. Using the same hand tools, native hardwoods and wrought iron, training and competition led to the development of highly artistic locks, stocks and barrels. While most of the early

The one of a kind Ned Smith Commemorative Pennsylvania Long Rifle, with all the accouterments, scrimshawed powder and primer horns, speed loader, ball starter, hunting knife, possibles bag and gun case, is historically correct. The rifle is 50-caliber, suitable for field use or as a collector's item. Raffle tickets for the rifle are \$10 each, three for \$25. Also available are a Long Rifle Ned Smith poster for \$10, plus \$4 shipping, and a Long Rifle patch for \$6, plus \$1.50 shipping and handling for 1-5 patches.

The proceeds will benefit the building fund of the Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art. For more information, contact the Center at P.O. Box 33, Millersburg, PA 17061. Phone: 717-692-3369; or visit their web site at www.nedsmithcenter.org.

Long Rifles carried simple incised carvings, golden age Long Rifles exhibited intricate, raised relief carvings on the forearm, lock/tang and under the cheekpiece. Engraved lock plates, brass thimbles, trigger guards, barrels and, particularly, the patch boxes exemplified the typical American rifle. Precious metals of gold, silver and even platinum were inlaid into the barrels, as well into the intricate relief carvings.

Ned Smith was a student of the Pennsylvania Long Rifle. His lifetime love for its history and its legacy of folk art motivated Ned to pick up the pen for several articles, and the brush for scores of line drawings and paintings. Ned wrote in the widely distributed Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission Leaflet No. 4. "A typical Pennsylvania Rifle weighed from seven to nine pounds, its overall length was a symmetrical 55 inches



from muzzle to butt plate, and its 45-caliber ball could kill man or beast at 300 yards or 'bark' a squirrel from the tallest tree. Known also, at a later time, as the 'Kentucky' Rifle because of the feats performed with it by Daniel Boone and other woodsmen in winning the land beyond the mountains, this superb firearm was the handiwork of several generations of Pennsylvania gunsmiths. Among the better known, in addition to Meylin, were Henry Albright, Daniel Boyer, Matthew and Peter Roesser, Thomas Butler, Jacob Decherd, Peter and Henry Leman, Philip Lefevre, Henry Dreppard, numerous members of the William Henry family, and several Pannabeckers.

Ned's *Game News* cover of December 1974 depicted a golden age Pennsylvania Long Rifle. Perhaps this rifle struck Ned as an "ideal" type of flintlock rifle. He wrote, "A splendid example of the Pennsylvania gun maker's art that I sketched from the collection of Joe Kindig, Jr., of York, can be seen in the cover painting on this issue. David Cooley, who is thought to have worked in Adams County, built it in the early 1800s. The drawing shows this rifle to be a slender 58½ inches in overall length with a 41-caliber octagon barrel 41¾ inches long. The inlays, including a brass patchbox and a silver cheekpiece oval, are beautifully engraved, and the richly figured maple

stock is embellished with scroll and cross-hatched carving typical of that era."

Two years later, at the height of the Bicentennial Celebration, Ned Smith expressed his feelings about this native folk art in the July 1976 *Game News* "Notes on the Evolution of the Pennsylvania Long Rifle." "For generations it's been known as the Kentucky Rifle. The reference is to that wild country beyond the Alleghenies where it proved its worth. But it's really the Pennsylvania Rifle, often called the Pennsylvania Long Rifle, for Pennsylvania is where it originated and, with very few exceptions, that's where it was made. I guess it shouldn't matter, but it does. After all, that old flintlock not only was the first truly American firearm, but it also played an important role in shaping a wilderness into what is now the United States of America. And that's something we Pennsylvanians shouldn't shrug off."

The Pennsylvania Long Rifle never really left the hearts and minds of artisans, gunsmiths, collectors, hunters and those who cherish this early American legacy. Ned never forgot, Pennsylvanians never forgot, and today, all Americans are remembering and thrilling at the sight of this purely American folk art. The Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art is remembering and honoring Ned Smith with a beautiful flintlock Long Rifle, created by the hands of celebrated Pennsylvania gunsmith William Slusser of Gardner. Completing the longhunter's equipment is a hand-tooled Pennsylvania hunting pouch by Gary Fatheree of Carlisle, and a beautifully scrimshawed map powder horn and priming horn by Skip Hamaker of Reading. In total, this is truly a modern contribution to a historic Pennsylvania Long Rifle legacy, in remembrance of a truly outstanding artist emeritus of Pennsylvania, Ned Smith, and his love for the Pennsylvania Long Rifle. □

The best friend on earth of man is the tree. When we use the tree respectfully and economically, we have one of the greatest resources on the earth.

— Frank Lloyd Wright



AS I PEERED through the branches the trees began to stand up, returning to the position they'd held for decades, before the storm uprooted them from the forest floor. Then, as the churning blades of the helicopter made strong limbs bend in their wind, I held on to my hard hat and watched sections of trees weighing thousands of pounds rise from the earth. Suddenly, I felt very small.

Acres of trees — including the superior black cherry Pennsylvania touts — were toppled by Hurricane Floyd in September of 1999. Valuable cherry, ash, oak and maple trees were left lying, broken, their roots reaching skyward.

Mother Nature had decided that a logging operation should take place, but she chose an extremely sensitive area — environmentally speaking. Game Commission Regional Forester Pat Donahue felt that a traditional operation was out of the question in the steep terrain. Widening ex-

isting trails and creating several miles of roads to accommodate the skidders and log trucks necessary to remove the timber traditionally could cause erosion, which would in turn allow sediment to pollute Arnolds Creek. But on the other hand, letting the valuable timber lie would be a waste. The solution? Helicopter logging.

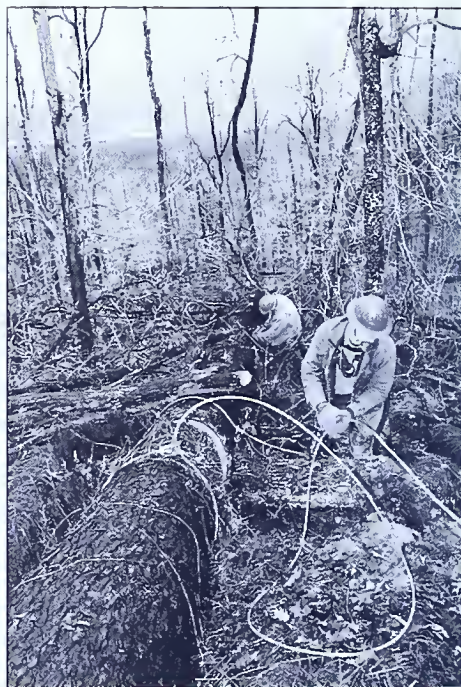
The process, widely practiced in the Pacific Northwest, has been used by several private lumber companies in Pennsylvania, but never on a game lands. In October 2000, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources hired helicopters for the first logging operation of its kind on state lands, nearby Ricketts Glen State Park, also damaged by Floyd. In 2001, the same company, Carson Helicopter Services, Inc., out of Jacksonville, Oregon, was contracted by Dwight Lewis Lumber Co., Inc. out of

Hillsgrove, PA, to log SGL 57.

Game Commission foresters divided the area into eight blocks — a total of 471 acres — and marked the timber to be sold. When it's all said and done, Lewis Lumber ended up with approximately 850,000 board feet from the \$216,565 contract, which stated that the trees had to be removed by helicopter to avoid environmental damage. A 187-acre section of the damaged area, near Beth Run, is in a more easily accessible area, and was contracted to RGM Hardwoods of Moscow, PA, as a traditional sale in five blocks.

On SGL 14 in Cameron County, near St. Marys, a recent storm damaged over 200 acres of trees on a steep side slope with lots of springs and wet areas. The inability to build roads through such a sensitive area called for the second game lands helicopter logging, and the Carson crews started the Cameron County job as soon as they left SGL 57.

The Game Commission uses timber sales as a tool for managing habitat for wildlife. Generally, forested game lands are managed on a sustainable basis. This allows the game lands to support wildlife that requires sev-



Foresters BRET DAUGHERTY and TIM FENSTERMACHER secure cables around a section of black cherry weighing more than 5,000 pounds to be lifted out by helicopter.

eral different stages of forest habitat. These sales on Game Lands 57 and 14 are salvage cuts, and otherwise would not have been logged, due to the environmental sensitivity of the area. In the future, however, as logging with helicopters becomes more commonplace in the state, the technique may be used to treat other sensitive areas.

Lewis Lumber hired Carson Services Helicopter Logging Division to cut and remove the timber from the Arnolds Creek area. Fifteen of Carson's cutters, overseen by "Bullbuck" Don Wolcott, spent about 17 days cutting trees to length, removing limbs, marking unacceptable sections to be left behind, and clearing brush from around the trees to be lifted out.

Once the cutters finished, the helicopter moved in. Five guys (known in the business as "hookers"), headed by Project Manager Bob Brock, darted through the woods, tossing cables over logs and securing them tightly for liftoff.



MEL LENTZ, cutter for Carson Services, clears brush from around a large black cherry, and measures and cuts the tree to length — note the tape stretching out from his tool belt.

Carson Forester Bret Daugherty and Lewis Lumber Forester Tim Fenstermacher split time between the woods and the landing area, marking more sections of trees, and helping hook up those to be taken.

As they worked, the huge Sikorsky Super-61 helicopter, capable of lifting 11,000 pounds, zoomed back and forth, with trees hanging from it like wind chimes. As the helicopter hovered overhead, the hookers rushed to attach cables to the dangling hook before the ship would rise up, plucking several tons of lumber from the ground as if the trees were twigs.

The logs were then flown to the landing area, two air-miles away. Normally, the company likes to keep the loads between 7,000 and 7,500 pounds, to be flown no more than a mile. Because of the terrain in this case, however, the landing area had to be farther away from some of the eight blocks, so the loads were targeted at around 8,000 pounds. The heavier loads help make up for time lost flying the longer distance, and at a cost of \$1 per

second while the blades are running, time is, literally, money.

At the landing area, six "chasers" watched as the helicopter approached and hovered above as the logs came to rest on the ground. The two pilots in the Sikorsky released the hook, the cables dropped, and the helicopter rose up again, disappearing over the ridge to pick up another load. In the meantime, the chasers rushed to remove the cables from the logs, securing the lengths into neat bundles to be picked up by the ship and returned to the hookers on another turn.

A log loader quickly picked the trees up from where the helicopter had dropped them, and placed them on a pile where the "knot bumpers" began their tasks. One measured and marked

the logs, while the other sawed stray limbs off and cut at the measurer's marks. Trucks would arrive later to carry the hundreds of logs to the sawmill in Hillsgrove, nearly 70 miles away.

After an hour of flying, the helicopter returned to the landing area to refuel. The 66-foot, twin-engine ship burns 165 gallons of fuel an hour, and during each refueling, the pilots switch positions between flying and reading the gauges. Such a large vessel demands two people to handle piloting it.

When flying shorter distances, the helicopters produce an average of 100 to 120 thousand board feet (MBF) daily. With the two-mile flight, however, they



A GIANT SIKORSKY Super-61 helicopter lifts thousands of pounds of timber out of the woods and flies the trees two miles, where they're stacked to await log trucks that will carry them 70 miles away.





AT THE LANDING site, chasers unhook the cables from the logs and bundle them. A log loader places the logs on a pile, where they're measured to length — usually a little over eight feet. A knot bumper uses a chainsaw to cut the logs, and also removes any branches the cutters may have missed earlier.



take four or five months to complete. The helicopter operation, with 15 cutters, five hookers, six chasers, two knot bumpers and two pilots, will complete a job more than twice the size in under a month — about 17 cutting and 12 flying days, which can overlap. And Carson has plenty of experience. The company has been logging with helicopters since 1970, and performed the first United States Forest Service salvage timber sale with helicopters, producing 16 million board feet of timber.

Helicopter logging has been proven to be environmentally and economically beneficial. While the initial cost may seem high, the time saved and reduced environmental impact actually balance out the cost. The Sikorsky can fly backwards, sideways and straight up and down, allowing it to enter into virtually inaccessible areas

were averaging 70 to 80 MBF a day. This rate, when compared to traditional logging, is astounding. The operation near Beth Run is being handled by two individuals, and will

to remove large amounts of timber quickly, and without damaging soil and streams. Once the helicopters are gone from the area, the only evidence that the area was logged is some missing trees. □

These helicopter loggers lead an unusual lifestyle. The majority of the workers call the Pacific Northwest home, but the crew works strictly in the East during the winter. Traveling for months on end, they rarely get home. As one puts it when asked where home is, "Right now, it's Pennsylvania." Many of the cutters tow trailers that they set up in local campgrounds, and are sometimes joined by their wives. One fellow camps in the woods where they're cutting at the time. When asked how often he gets home to Cathlamet, Washington, Bullbuck Don Wolcott does some quick math in his head and replies, "About three weeks a year." This past Christmas, though, he was home for 10 days, which is the longest in recent memory. "If I had kids in school," he reasons, "I wouldn't do this." D.J., Don's son, works with his father, and Don's wife sometimes travels with them. According to Don, most of the guys who work for him are either single or don't have young children. So most of the crew is comprised of younger men, with a few exceptions. Ron Tommila of Rochester, Washington, is 62, and, as Don puts it, "tough as nails."

Forester Bret Daugherty, on the other hand, tries to get home to Montana for two out of every five weeks. Of course, things don't always work out that way, but he has two blue-tick hounds that travel around the country with him, keeping him company.

A Place to Dream

By Linda Swank

Lancaster County WCO

IS THERE a better place to dream than at an elementary school? Ask the students and they may tell you it is a good place to dream. Ask the teachers and they may tell you the students are dreaming too much and not concentrating on their work. In the fall of 1997 I began working with several teachers at Providence Elementary School, and we discovered we all were dreamers.

In April of 1972, as part of the first Earth Day celebration, some plantings were done on about six acres of school property, and it was being used as a nature study site. Over the years a trail system was established at the site, but as the years went by, little or no maintenance was done. Eventually, the site became so overgrown with exotic and invasive plants that its usefulness as a study site diminished. The trees originally planted for wildlife had died or were no longer providing food and cover.

It was during a conversation about the nature study site with teachers Dustin Snyder and Barbara Wagner that the dream

began. We all realized that we had a wonderful area on the school grounds to use for outdoor study, but could we make it better? The “seeds” were planted.

During the fall of 1997 and the spring of 1998, Barb, Dustin and I began organizing an effort to reconstruct the outdoor site. We soon realized we needed some expert help, but we also had no money to keep the dream alive. I called Dave Henry, the regional forester for the Game Commission’s Southeast Region. I asked Dan Lynch, the region’s wildlife education specialist, for help. These two experts evaluated the site and then suggested ways to enhance it for wildlife. But there was still that money factor.

It was obvious: We needed some more partners. Patrick Fasano was contacted, and he turned out to be our project savior. Pat operates his own forest management, land planning and landscaping business. He’s also secretary of the Octoraro Watershed Association, and I had worked with him before and knew he would be a valuable member of our team.

Together we prepared a 10-year plan to rehab the site. Part of the plan involved cutting down trees and drastically changing the plant composition of this site. We knew this might cause some problems with people living next to the school and with parents of the school’s students. We already had ap-



Deputy HAINES HENRY JR. begins clearing for the Providence Elementary Wildlife Environmental Site.

proval and support from school principal, Thomas Brackbill, but figured approval from the Solanco School Board should also be obtained. From the beginning the idea was to have the students involved as much as possible, so in May of 1998 our plan was presented to the Solanco School Board for approval.

As part of the fourth grade curriculum at Providence, the students learn about Pennsylvania government. They select a Governor and a Lt. Governor for their classes. Two young ladies, serving as Governor and Lt Governor, presented the plan. They did an excellent job, and our project was approved.

But back to the money. We floundered for a year or two. The Providence Elementary School PTO had pledged \$500, but that was not going to cover the cost of a dream. Pat Fasano suggested we apply for a grant. In his work with the Octoraro Watershed Association, he had become quite accomplished at writing grants and obtaining money. He gave me a sample grant, and I wrote a proposal for what was now being called the "Providence Elementary Wildlife Environmental Site."

When I became a WCO I never imagined I'd be writing detailed grant proposals. My job was in the woods, I figured. Just another sign of our changing times. After spending hours at my computer, and with lots of help from Pat, our first grant proposal was in the mail. Months later, we were informed that the grant had been denied. The good news was that Pat, while writing a grant application for the watershed association, had included the wildlife site in a proposal that focused on integration of riparian restorations and



THE BIRD VIEWING platform at the Providence Elementary Wildlife Environmental Site nears completion. Note the windows at varying heights, so people of all sizes can see through.

science education. In a nutshell, it's teaching students about the importance of water and watersheds in our daily lives.

The grant was sent to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) through the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay. This time we were awarded a grant for \$3,000. In addition, the Watershed Association had submitted a grant proposal to The Lancaster Foundation for funding for several projects, including the Providence outdoor site. The Foundation approved only part of the request but — you guessed it — it was for our school site. We received a pledge of \$18,000 to spend in one year.

Hoping that funding would soon be coming our way, in August of 2000 we decided to use the money that had been promised from the Providence PTO. Deputy WCO Carl Warfel is a heavy equipment operator for Andrews Excavating. He made arrangements to obtain a dozer and donated a Saturday to clear approximately one acre of trees, vines and dense shrubs from what is now our wildlife education site. Deputies Haines Henry and Jesse Henry were on hand to help, as well as a new partner, Frank Rohrer Jr. Frank is a business associate of Pat's, with his own business, Woodlands and Wildlife Management.

We all put in a long, hard, hot day cutting up trees, pulling shrubs and helping the dozer operator. Many thanks go out to the volunteers on that day, as well as to Andrews Excavating for a good price on the use of the dozer. Next we got seed to get vegetation established on the site for winter. Frank and I used a hand seeder to put down annual rye grass. A little rain and we were on our way.

Throughout the late winter and spring, meetings were taking place between all the partners to plan the spending of the grant money. Everyone had something to do. Thomas Brackbill checked on permits and paid bills, as the PTO became the fund's administrator for the EPA grant. Tom also acted as our liaison with the school board, the teachers, and remains a great supporter of the project. Barb and Dustin have been busy preparing new curriculum to be used in conjunction with the wildlife site. Not only have they focused on the fourth grade study material, but have generated some ideas for all grade levels to use the site. And perhaps most importantly, Pat and Frank became our official consulting agents, and Pat, after several years of donating his time, was finally getting paid for his expert advice and time. Where would we be if he had not stuck with the partnership?

Pat and Frank hired subcontractors to complete work on the site. The site was sprayed to clear some of those invasive plants that sprang up again during the spring. A special native wildflower seed mix was obtained and seeded on the site. A straw-mulch was placed over the seed and everyone prayed for rain.

To keep the students involved, a day was planned for the students to plant trees and perennial flower plugs. This day also coincided with the school's Grandparents Day.

On a hot day in May 2001, children, grandparents, teachers and volunteers planted more than 100 trees and flowers. The students carried buckets of water to give the new plants a much-needed drink. Pat, Frank and I planted trees well into the

afternoon in ground that was very hard. Dustin and Barb kept the students involved right up until the end of the school year, carrying water to the plants. We finally got the rain, and before we knew it, it was August.

All along we had visions of having a wildlife-viewing platform on the site, where the students could watch a bird feeding station and other wildlife. Thanks to the grant, that part of the dream was about to become a reality. A contractor was hired to design and build the platform. Pat, Frank and I provided the labor. Thank goodness for the contractor who measured, marked and cut the materials. We put things where he told us, and now we have a beautiful platform with three walls. Small windows were put in the walls at different heights so people of all sizes can see through, and a ramp was installed for wheelchair use.

What does the future hold? Birdfeeders, birdhouses and nest boxes will be established. More conifer trees will be planted. Dustin Snyder is planning a project for her fourth grade students to create a virtual tour of the wildlife site to be placed on the Internet. Students around the world will be able to visit our wildlife site. The site will be enrolled in the National Wildlife Federation's "Schoolyard Habitats" program. All 1st through 5th grade students from Solanco School District will use the site. Wildlife and its habitat, water use and watershed importance are just a few subjects studied at the site.

As far as Barb, Dustin, Pat, Frank and I, we realized when we began this project nearly five years ago that this was a career-long project. There is more acreage to manage, more grant proposals to write, maintenance on the current site, more kids to teach and, most importantly, more dreams to fulfill. □



Gobblin' Sunrise

By Jeffrey A. Hannold

IT WAS 4:30 when I reached over to shut off the alarm. I seriously considered rolling over and going back to sleep, but the anticipation of my first spring gobbler hunt was enough to get me going. I gathered my gear, stepped outside into the chilly damp air, climbed into my pickup and turned on the windshield wipers to clear the early morning rain. I had a half hour drive to my hunting spot on SGL 146, in Crawford County. I had found plenty of sign there while scouting, and a relative had heard several gobblers on the game lands.

This morning I was surprised no other vehicles were in the parking lot, and I quickly gathered my gear. I made sure I had my assortment of calls, and I pulled my 12-gauge shotgun from its case and loaded it with 3-inch magnum no. 4s.

With my anticipation building, I looked up and noticed some breaks in the clouds. The steady rain and drizzle began to subside, and I could see the full moon peeking through the clouds. I walked around the gate on the mowed path and began my 20-minute hike to my destination. Not wanting to spook any turkeys, I didn't use a flashlight, but rather, found my way by the light of the moon. My imagination went into overdrive as I made my way into a dark hollow. As I trudged across a rushing creek, I heard a twig snap. Wondering what was there, a sense of foreboding uneasiness came over me. In the dark woods, every stump, every twisted branch transformed into some kind of ghoulish goblin. I began to feel like a tall awkward scarecrow under the moonlight. I had to get my mind back to turkey hunting, and as I did, the tension began to subside. I made my way up a gentle sloping hillside, trying to

be as quiet as possible to avoid spooking any gobblers that might be roosting in the hollow below. It was still dark, but I could easily make out the silhouette of a large beech tree. It seemed like a good spot to set up, so I sat down to wait for daybreak.

I looked up through the bare treetops into the clearing sky and found the Big Dipper and the North Star. I could begin to make out my surroundings, and as I looked to the east I could see a glimmer of gold and yellow on the horizon. All around me the woods were starting to wake up, and it wasn't long before the song of a distant robin heralded in the new dawn. This couldn't be the foreboding landscape I had earlier walked through, I thought.

I pulled the box call from my vest, hoping my practicing would pay off. I started with a few soft tree calls and waited. A few minutes later I tried again and heard a gobble below me. The sound cut through the silence like a crack of thunder. It was two weeks into the season, and I knew this area had been hunted heavily. I began to wonder if the birds were call shy from all the hunting and calling activity. A moment later I heard the bird fly off the roost, and then all was quiet. I waited for the bird to gobble again, but there was no reply.

By 7:30, disappointment and pessimism began to creep in, and I wondered if I should move. After a few more yelps, however, I got an instant reply. Apparently, the gobbler was circling around me. I gave a few soft clucks and then set the call on the ground. I tried to shift around to the other side of the tree, but as I did I noticed the

gobbler only 50 yards away. The bird stopped dead in his tracks. I felt the color drain from my face. Was this going to be the end of my first hunt?

I sat motionless for what seemed like an eternity. I noticed the bird's beard and crimson wattles, and to my relief, he started moving closer. I could feel my heart pounding, and when he went behind a large cherry tree I got the gun ready. The bird closed the distance, gobbling as he came, and when

he turned broadside I put the bead at the base of his neck and pulled the trigger. I ejected the empty and chambered another round, but it wasn't necessary. I stood over the handsome tom and examined the 5-inch beard. I know some hunters would have passed on the bird, waiting for a longbeard, but this gobbler was a

trophy to me in every sense of the word. My hands were still shaking as I filled out and attached my tag.

I stood up, shuffling the bird from one hand to the other, and I could feel the morning sun on my back. I paused for a moment, to reflect on everything I had experienced, and it couldn't have been a more glorious day. On the way back to the parking lot I was surprised when two jakes sprinted across the path.

As I climbed into my truck I felt a euphoria that I haven't experienced in a long time. I couldn't wait to get home to show the bird to my wife and son. □



Tracking Heritage

By Paula Zitzler

SPRING IS A GREAT TIME to take a different look at your favorite hunting ground. There's that rock where you shot your first deer. The stump where you missed that trophy gobbler. Up that ridge is where your brother shot the bear; your sister got that doe with the white feet over by that spring. The bend in the trail, the stand of hemlocks, and the overgrown field — each triggers a memory. It's as if the land has become your personal storybook.

There are other stories on that land, too. It's impossible to be the first person to set foot on any acre of land in Pennsylvania. A ridge top or a valley bottom, someone else has been there. Perhaps a hunter with a stone-tipped spear tracked a mastodon here; maybe a nervous farmer clenched his flintlock as he scouted for signs of British rangers and their Iroquois allies. We are always following in someone else's tracks.

Over the centuries, many of the people who took to the fields and woods of Pennsylvania were not out to enjoy a leisurely day of hunting — they were working.

Many Pennsylvanians still make their livings outdoors. But in the 19th century, the Pennsylvania countryside was an industrial landscape. The nation was growing, and materials and products taken from the commonwealth's terrain made it possible. Pennsylvania's seemingly unlimited supply of timber, iron, oil and coal worked its way across the continent through the efforts of railroaders and homesteaders. It provided the back-

bone of the eastern cities as they expanded horizontally and vertically. Just as Pennsylvanians had been essential to the earlier revolution that established the independent nation, by the mid-19th century they had established the state as the center of America's Industrial Revolution.

The production of iron has left an enduring legacy on the landscape. There were hundreds of iron furnaces in Pennsylvania, with the greatest concentration between the ridges of southcentral Pennsylvania, along the branches of the Juniata River. The wooded slopes, limestone ridges, and iron ore deposits conspired with the transportation opportunities provided by the rivers to create the world-renowned Juniata Iron.

Iron making required a source of iron, a suitable flux material, a fuel and oxygen. In the Juniata region, extensive deposits of rich ores were common. A late 19th century geologist identified at least 15 different types of iron ore, noting that the ironmasters used specific "recipes" for combining the ores, depending on whether the final product would be wrought or cast. In the Juniata region, each charcoal-fueled furnace produced about 40 tons of iron each week.

The furnaces operated during the spring, summer and fall. On average, about 80 acres of trees needed to be cut and "coaled" to produce the 100 tons of charcoal needed to fuel the furnace for a week. In the course of a season, about 2,000 acres of forest went into each of the dozens of furnaces in central Pennsylvania. Just 150 years ago, the forests that we take for granted and enjoy today along the branches of the Juniata were decimated to make iron. As we walk through those

woods, we are following in the tracks of an army of ironworkers, colliers, teamsters, woodcutters, ore miners and quarry workers.

Westsylvania Outdoor Heritage, a 3-day festival blending heritage and conservation, will be celebrated at the Huntingdon County Fairgrounds, May 2-4, 2002. The annual event is co-hosted by the Pennsylvania Game Commission and the Westsylvania Heritage Corporation, and offers a unique assortment of groups and activities.

Now in its third year, Westsylvania Outdoor Heritage has proven to be like no other outdoor or heritage festival in the state.

More than 70 exhibitors will be standing by with displays, ready to discuss subjects as diverse as pet care, family life on the colonial frontier, canoeing the Juniata River, and photographs of early automobile travel along the Lincoln Highway (U.S. Route 30).

A well-supervised range will offer opportunities to experience a wide variety of shooting sports. Shooting stations manned by experts will feature muzzleloaders, shotguns, small-bore arms and bows.

A wide range of activities and demonstrations will be offered at locations throughout the Huntingdon County Fairgrounds. PGC wildlife conservation officers will tag and record information about live bears that have been trapped around the southcentral region. Thanks to the Fish and Boat Commission and several local sportsmen's clubs, kids will be able to fish for trout in a stream that borders the fairgrounds. Expert fly tiers will offer instruction streamside, allowing kids to tie and test their colorful creations.

Civil War and Revolutionary War period re-enactors will put on living histories, including field camps and an accurate portrayal of a Civil War field hospital. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers from Raystown Lake are constructing a replica of a keelboat used

by those intrepid explorers Lewis and Clark during their exploration of the American West. Rich Pawling will portray a 19th century canal boater of the Pennsylvania Main Line Canal. A photographer will demonstrate the

19th century techniques of taking pictures on glass slides.

What would a festival be without music and food? Westsylvania Outdoor Heritage will feature a variety of both. A fireworks display will light the sky on Friday night.

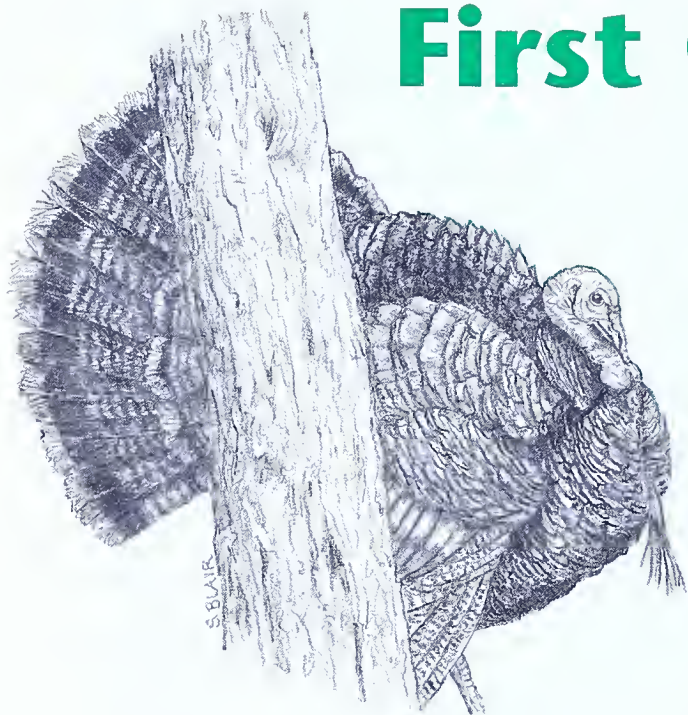
Last year, more than 15,000 people, including 3,000 students, attended. If your organization or business is interested in exhibiting at Westsylvania Outdoor Heritage or in sponsorship opportunities, or you'd like to arrange a student field trip, contact Dave Sewak at 1-800-898-3636 or at dsewak@westsylvania.org.

Westsylvania Outdoor Heritage will be open on Thursday, May 2 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Friday, May 3 from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Saturday, May 4 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission and parking are free. The Huntingdon County Fairgrounds is located just south of Huntingdon. For additional information call 1-800-898-3636 weekdays, or log onto www.westsylvania.org/oh.

Track your heritage at Westsylvania Outdoor Heritage

First Gobbler

By Matt Pillar



WITH THE spring turkey season fast approaching I had plans to buy a new gun and take my first gobbler. I surfed all over the Internet, looking at turkey guns and checking out hunting websites. All week long it took everything I had to sit still at my desk, and I spent every lunch hour driving to every sporting goods store in the area, trying to find the 3-inch, no. 5 shotshells I wanted to try.

On the Friday morning before opening day I got up early, loaded my gear in the Jeep, and then headed for Warren to buy a gun and then hunt gobblers the next day. I showed up at my friend Chad's doorstep 15 minutes earlier than I had planned, and after breakfast we talked about turkey hunting and guns.

We drove to my cousin Tim's gun shop, and soon he was pulling a new Remington 870 Express off the rack and putting it in my hands. Nothing fancy, but it looked like it could do the job. A few dead turkey targets at

35 yards convinced me to part with some money. I had Tim dress it up with a camo sling and a Kick's GT 660 choke tube. I achieved my first goal and had one to go.

That evening we did some scouting in a spot where Chad had seen a mature gobbler a few days earlier, but we didn't hear or see a thing. That night we fell asleep while watching a turkey hunting video in Chad's living room, and the next morning we got up early and discussed the morning's strategy while eating breakfast.

Despite not locating any birds the evening before, Chad was insistent that we hunt the area we had scouted. We arrived at our spot on time, and after setting up a decoy, Chad started calling. He yelped on a slate and then clucked and cackled with a diaphragm. It sounded wonderful to me, and knowing Chad's success record, I was confident his calling would work. Chad called for an hour, and although we heard a few far-off gobblers, nothing came in.

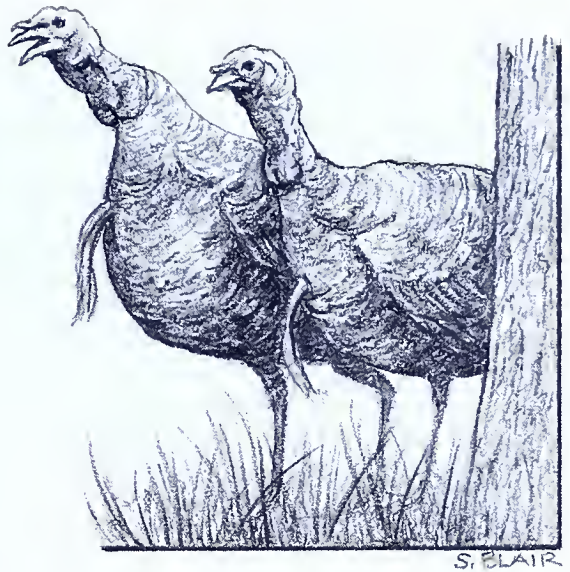
Chad decided we should move, so we gathered up the decoy and other gear and headed out. "Sometimes, especially when I haven't located birds the night before, I like to cover a lot of ground," Chad said. "We'll walk slowly and quietly, listening and calling every 40 or 50 yards. If we get one to gobble, find a big tree to set up against, and I'll place the decoy and then set up behind you. Make sure your gloves and headnet are on, keep your gun on your knee and stay alert."

We made our way over to a draw near

a field when Chad thought he heard a gobble. No sooner did he strike the call when a gobble echoed back across the field. Chad knew the bird was coming fast and quickly instructed me to set up against a wide birch tree. "There's no time to set out the decoy," Chad whispered as he planted his back at the base of a tree five yards behind me.

It turned out there were three gobblers — two across the field and one over the hill — and two were coming in fast. I glanced back at Chad, calling like a pro. In no time at all, I spotted the bright red heads of two birds closing the distance. They were strutting, gobbling, hissing and fanning in the sunlight. I remembered Chad telling me that the dominant male will often fan and strut more than the subordinate toms, so I picked the one that danced the most and trained my new gun on his head as he strutted our way.

My heart was pounding like a drum and I wondered if the gobblers would hear it. The birds were in range but they stopped behind a wide tree. I waited patiently, and the bigger of the two birds cautiously craned his neck around the tree, intrigued by Chad's insistent



calling. When the head of my new shotgun blotted out the tom's head, I pulled the trigger. The big gobbler tumbled over backwards and the other bird bolted and ran out of sight.

Chad seemed more excited than I, as for some, I guess, calling in a guy's first gobbler is more thrilling than shooting one. For others, buying a new gun on the day before the season and killing a mature gobbler the next day is about as good as it gets. □

TURKEY HUNTING SAFETY TIPS

Positively identify your target before pulling the trigger.

Make your position known to other hunters.

Never stalk a turkey or turkey sound.

Assume every noise and movement is another hunter.

While calling select a natural barrier to protect your back.

Shout "Stop" to alert approaching hunters.

Eliminate red, white, blue and black from your clothing.

Preselect a zone of fire.

Never carry decoys through the woods in your hands; use a vest or bag.

While fluorescent orange is not required at stationary calling locations, it's strongly recommended. While moving, hunters are required to wear at least 100 square inches visible 360 degrees.

A Little Help

Penn's Woods Sketchbook/Bob Sopchick

TREAD LIGHTLY. It is a fragile world we step into each day, a complex continuum where each element is affected by another. Form unto form, force unto force, even the slightest influence may compound dramatically, spanning distance and time.

Step boldly. It is a resilient world that awaits each passage, each form contending with the wake of another. In spring, the vagaries of the wind and the wild rise like a wave that washes over the greening uplands. The world grows keen on whim, is strengthened by chance. Miraculously, order reigns.

Yap-yurrrrrrr! Yap-yurrrrrrr! A fox barks as he does every morning when the false dawn creeps in the western sky. His mate, back at the den with a litter, hears him, as does a wild turkey on roost, who gobbles mightily.

The fox takes a tram road down the mountain. Halfway down, he encounters a turkey hunter rounding a bend. The hunter never sees or hears the fleeing fox, but plods along, a good ways yet to climb. A blush rises in the hunter's cheeks and in the eastern sky as hunter and sun labor to the same ridge.

The fox weaves his way through a blackberry patch in the river bottom. The damp, alluvial earth is redolent with the sweet scent of rabbit. Patiently, the fox unravels the cottontail's trail, then inches forward. With vertical pupils open wide and ears pricked forward, he scans the immediate cover. His wet nostrils quiver, drinking in molecules of rabbit. So close now. His forepaw raises like a pointing dog.

The rabbit blinks and the chase is on. It squirts through a slot in an exposed root mass and streaks down a reedy aisle. The fox is right behind the pulsing puff of the rabbit's tail, the white tip of his own glorious brush whipping as he zigzags through the brakes. The rabbit arcs through deep cover, gaining a few yards, but the fox bisects that

radius expertly, and in a sudden rush, pins the rabbit to the ground. Its quavering scream rolls across the river, then muffles and quits. Without resting, the fox picks up the rabbit, and with his pointy ears pinned back, turns uphill to the den.

A BOAR RACCOON hears the doglike tread of the approaching fox, and shuffles up the tilted trunk of a windfall. The coon watches the fox pass beneath, then follows a mossy drainage gut to a wetlands bordering the river.

The marsh is usually flooded, with grassy hummocks sticking out of the water here and there; but this year it is mostly grass. Even with recent rains, the marsh is still recovering from



a late winter drought. The coon follows the slick drag trail of a beaver, and his nostrils flare at the pungent scent left by a muskrat. The coon flushes a nesting hen mallard from atop a stump, and finds a clutch of eight pale-buff eggs cupped neatly there.

After eating the eggs, the coon waddles through a copse of towering sycamores. It climbs the tallest, and curls up in the abandoned penthouse nest of a great blue heron. The coon falls asleep just as the mountaintop across the valley is washed with yellow light.

With the nest destroyed, the hen and her mate fly downriver. They set down in a sheltered cove, but are immediately driven off by another mallard drake defending that nesting area. The pair circles back upriver, beyond their original site, and veers into a wide, weedy hollow that crosses a road, ending as a deeply dished bowl.

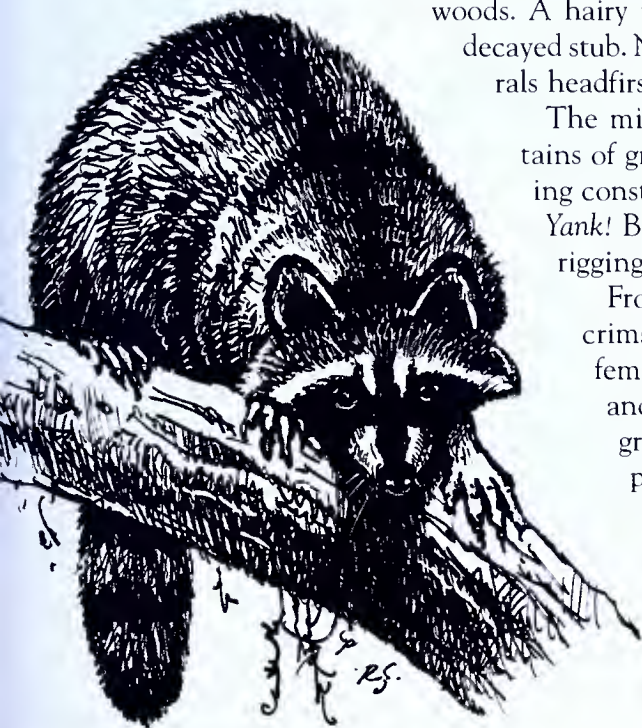
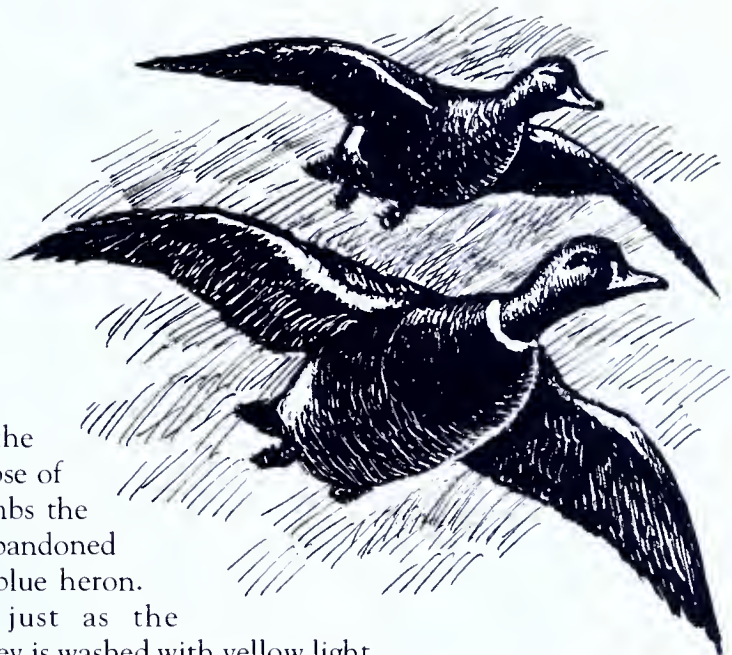
The ducks course low, round and round, above the weathered ruins of an old farm. The hen spies the glint of water from a trickling spring. They set down in what was once the farmyard, where decades before, domestic ducks waddled about. The hen surveys the deep pockets of weeds for a place to renest.

SEVERAL CHICKADEES flit among last year's goldenrod, hanging like acrobats as they glean the withered stalks. When the mallards sweep above the weed tops on whistling wings, the chickadees shift into the edge of the woods. A hairy woodpecker joins them and works a decayed stub. Nearby, a white-breasted nuthatch spirals headfirst down a black cherry trunk.

The mixed flock drifts deeper through curtains of grapevines. They are a noisy lot, talking constantly: *Dee-dee-dee. Peek! Peek! Yank! Yank!* Bits of bark sprinkle down through the rigging, peppering the leaves.

From the deep shadows of a white pine, crimson eyes watch the lively troupe. A female Cooper's hawk lets loose her perch and glides like a gray wedge through the grapevines, neatly plucking the woodpecker from a tree. She lights next to a puddle and holds the woodpecker underwater, drowning it. In short order, the hungry hawk plucks and devours most of the breast.

A blue jay first sees the reflec-

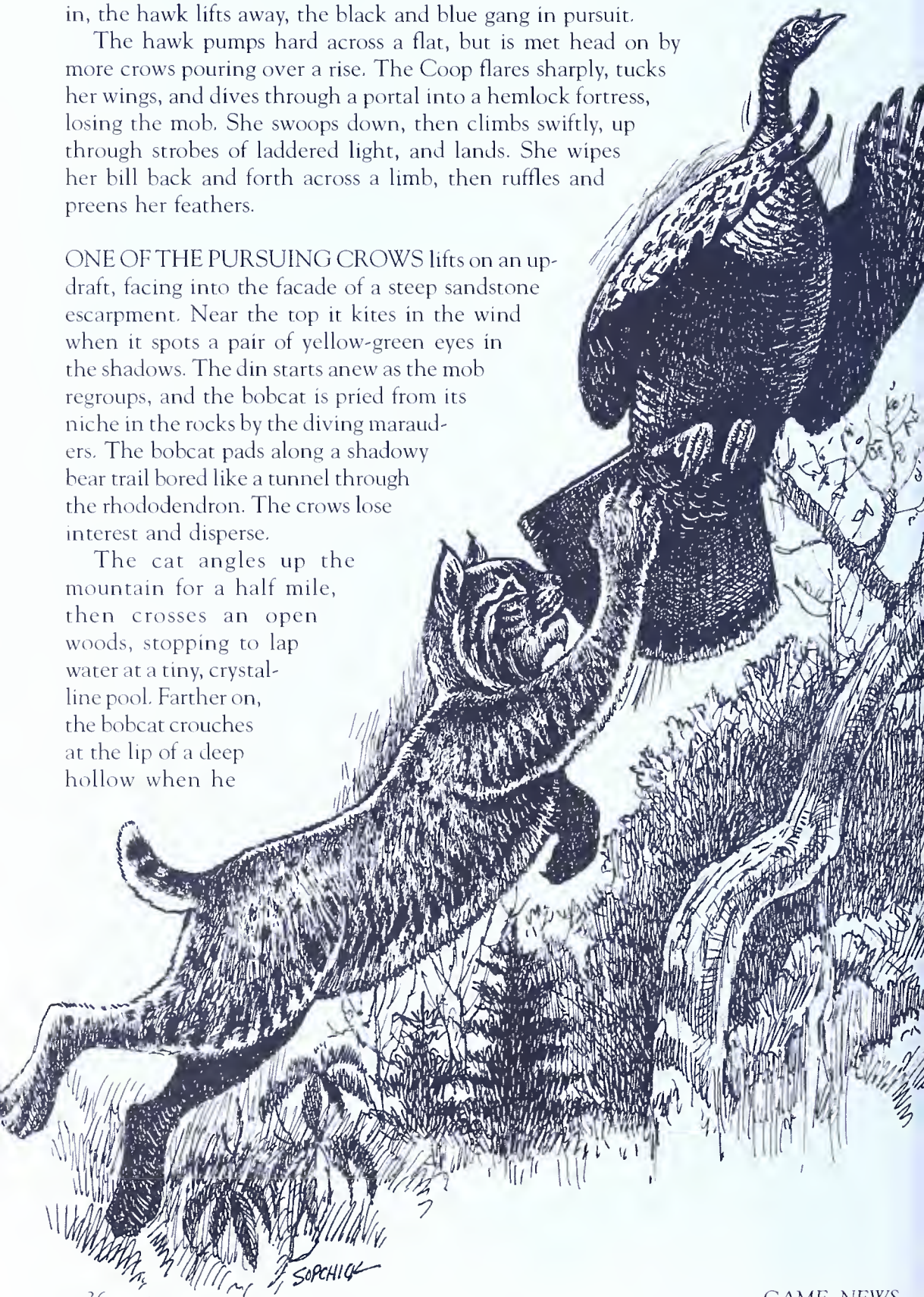


tion of the hawk in the puddle and then the hawk itself. The jay shrieks an alarm, and two others quickly hail its call. The screaming jays triangulate on their arch enemy. At first the hawk ignores her tormenters, but when several crows pile in, the hawk lifts away, the black and blue gang in pursuit.

The hawk pumps hard across a flat, but is met head on by more crows pouring over a rise. The Coop flares sharply, tucks her wings, and dives through a portal into a hemlock fortress, losing the mob. She swoops down, then climbs swiftly, up through strobes of laddered light, and lands. She wipes her bill back and forth across a limb, then ruffles and preens her feathers.

ONE OF THE PURSUING CROWS lifts on an up-draft, facing into the facade of a steep sandstone escarpment. Near the top it kites in the wind when it spots a pair of yellow-green eyes in the shadows. The din starts anew as the mob regroups, and the bobcat is pried from its niche in the rocks by the diving marauders. The bobcat pads along a shadowy bear trail bored like a tunnel through the rhododendron. The crows lose interest and disperse.

The cat angles up the mountain for a half mile, then crosses an open woods, stopping to lap water at a tiny, crystal-line pool. Farther on, the bobcat crouches at the lip of a deep hollow when he



hears turkeys clucking just below. He waits, motionless, just another tan stone among others. His muscles bunch when a large hen emerges from the thinning laurel, pecking at the duff only a few yards away.

Cat and bird launch skyward, and a single claw on the raking paw of the cat snags the claw on the turkey's hind toe. For a fraction of a second gravity seems suspended as life and death hang in the air. The bobcat falls, dropping down through the springy limbs of a laurel shrub, landing awkwardly in un-catlike fashion.

The three hens rise above the trees and glide across the hollow. With much commotion, they land in a birch thicket where a doe and her yearling fawns are bedded. The deer spook and bound away.

A gobbler, walking from the edge of an old grassy field to deeper woods stops when the deer trot by. He turns and walks quickly back to the edge of the field, where he stands on tiptoes and looks around. Nothing follows the deer.

When the hens begin to cluck and yelp, he gobbles. Earlier, the gobbler had heard another hen near a rockpile out in the middle of the field, but when he didn't see her he turned and walked away.

Below, the trio of hens files out into the field. They spot the lone hen clucking and purring near the rock pile. The lonesome gobbler sees them and double gobbles. He strides into the field, eager to join them.

He walks and struts across the field, from a distance resembling a black umbrella held horizontally, opening and closing. When the noisy hens join their sister near the rock pile, the gobbler comes running, leaving a silver wake in the grass. He pulls up at ten yards and displays.

His long beard is bejeweled with dewdrops, and when he turns in the sun, his feathers gleam like a suit of gilded chain mail. Sunlight glares from the flat plane of his chestnut-colored fan. He pirouettes so his fan is always fully displayed to the hens. He spits and drums several times in succession. When the deer cut across the field, his head periscopes up, and a shotgun blast shatters the silence, echoing.

The gobbler's great barred wings beat a mad, involuntary tattoo against the earth. The turkey hunter jumps out of the rock pile, and on wobbly legs hustles over to the gobbler. He kneels beside the bird and watches the hens and deer disappear into the far woods.

He had been hunting the gobbler for three straight mornings, but the longbeard always hung up or went off with hens. This morning he brought a decoy and set up in the rock pile. He heard the gobbler behind him, and was disappointed that it could not see the decoy. Luckily, just when the gobbler was moving off, the hens came into the field, and the gobbler couldn't resist.

The hunter takes the long tram road down the mountain. Even though he is tired, and the turkey is heavy, he walks with a spring in his step.

All he needed, he thought, was a little help.





FIELD NOTES



Quick Response

WAYNE — After stopping an individual who had shot a deer from his vehicle, I smelled alcohol on his breath. As I attempted to explain why I had stopped him, the man became belligerent. He exclaimed that he knew his rights and said he was calling the police. He called 911 on his cell phone and told the operator he was reporting an accident and wanted the police. A few moments later the police showed up, realized the man was intoxicated, and after a sobriety test, he was taken away in the police car. Trainee Ray O'Donnell turned to me and said, "He really showed you that he knows his rights, didn't he?"

— WCO FRANK DOOLEY, TYLER HILL



New Technique

After skinning beavers I dip the pelts in a solution to kill fleas and then hang them near the woodstove to dry. One day I returned home to find that my girlfriend JoAnn had already dried some pelts for me. "It was easy," she said. "I just put them in the washing machine on the spin cycle and it zinged the water right out of 'em."

— WALTER E. BOWDEN, GAME LANDS MAINTENANCE WORKER, EMPORIUM

Fake?

POTTER — I drove by an area where I often set up my deer decoy to catch roadhunters, when I had to slam on my brakes and back up because a small buck was standing perfectly still in the exact pose as my decoy. I looked around, expecting my neighboring officer to appear from the brush, laughing about playing a joke on me, but no one was around. Somehow, I still think the laugh was on me.

— WCO DENISE H. MITCHELTREE, CROSS FORKS

First Time for Everything

VENANGO — I attended a hearing at Magistrate Bill Martin's office when he recessed the proceedings to perform a wedding. We joked that the couple might need a hunting license as well as a marriage license.

— WCO LENOARD C. HRIBAR, OIL CITY

Gone in a Flash

UNION — My son-in-law Andy, who was raised in a city and has little interest in the outdoors, was visiting one day when I brought home a bear in a culvert trap to tag before releasing. As Andy peered into the trap he said the bear would go 300 pounds. I told him he was a little high, that it would go about 225. After taking a chest measurement (an accurate method for determining the weight of a bear) we came up with 300 pounds. Andy chided me for being off in my estimation, and displayed confidence in his prowess around bears, until the animal's sedative began to wear off. Andy watched me finish the bear from the inside of the house, but he said he only went in to tell his wife how much better he was than me at judging the weight of bears.

— WCO BERNARD J. SCHMADER, MILLMONT

Crossed Signals

Wildlife technician Jack Gilbert was using radio telemetry to track tundra swans at Middle Creek when he received a strong signal at the boat launch. He soon realized, however, that the signal was not coming from the flock in the middle of the lake, but rather from near the visitors center. After moving he again picked up a signal but the swans near the visitors center did not have radio collars. He reached the building and realized the signal was coming from inside. Jack, you're supposed to monitor live birds, not the taxidermy mount with a radio collar displayed in the auditorium.

— BERT MYERS, ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION SPECIALIST, MIDDLE CREEK

He Who Laughs . . .

LANCASTER — I've learned from past experience to always carry an extra set of vehicle keys, because more than once I've locked them in and had to use a coat hanger and rope to get the door open. My neighboring officer used to always kid me about having to do that, until one day when he got locked out of his vehicle it was my skinny arm and a coat hanger that got him out of the woods, so to speak. Keith, Do you have that extra key in your pocket yet?

— WCO LINDA L. SWANK, KIRKWOOD

That'll Teach 'Em

TRAINING SCHOOL — Identifying trees during winter can be difficult, especially when the instructor picks out challenging specimens. After a stressful afternoon of quizzing, our instructor's "duck and hide" maneuvers were evaluated by trainees armed with snowballs.

— TRAINEE JONATHAN S. ZUCK, HARRISBURG

Plenty of 'Em

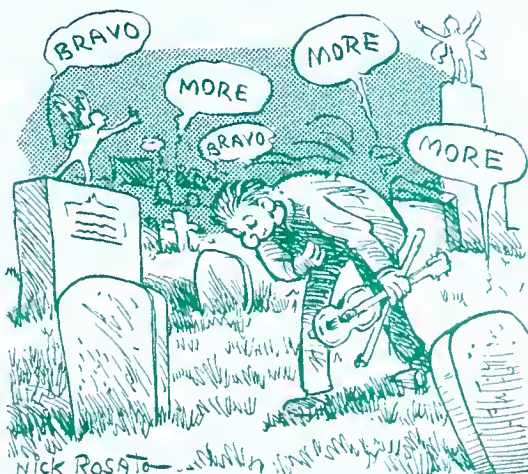
HUNTINGDON — I talked to a hunter who saw 35 deer one day during the late muzzleloader season on a Forest-Game project here.

— WCO PHILIP J. LUKISH, ALEXANDRIA

Time Flies

TRAINING SCHOOL — I just realized that I'll be a WCO by the time you read this Field Note.

— TRAINEE CARL M. SZYMANSKI, HARRISBURG



Ideal Location

GREENE — I noticed a vehicle parked near a remote cemetery and, thinking someone was hunting or trapping, I went to investigate. I came upon a man intently and noisily playing the violin, and when he saw me he explained that he leaves his office at lunchtime to play his violin to ease stress. I looked around for a minute, and then couldn't resist saying, "I bet you don't get many complaints from your audience."

— WCO ROD BURNS, WAYNESBURG

Hunter Becomes Hunted

WYOMING — Jack Wesnesky watched in amazement as a housecat that had been sitting at the edge of a fish hatchery waterway sprang forward and hooked a trout in its claws, and then a large hawk dropped from a pine tree and impaled the hapless feline with its talons.

— WCO WILLIAM WASSERMAN, TUNKHANNOCK

It Wasn't Pretty

TRAINING SCHOOL — We discovered that it's not a good idea to put 22 people who have lived together for 47 weeks in a gym to practice self-defense tactics.

— TRAINEE BETH A. FIFE, HARRISBURG



Strange Happenings

WARREN — In January I witnessed the following events: A skunk with a muzzle full of porcupine quills (I'm not sure who claimed victory in that battle), gobbling turkeys, a goose that struck a power line and tumbled into a river, and finally, a deer that ran into a large oak tree (the tree never gave an inch).

—WCO DUSTIN M. STONER, TIDIOUTE

Smile, You're On . . .

BUTLER/LAWRENCE — Two individuals shot at a deer from a vehicle on a well-traveled highway while I was directly behind them. One of the violators said that he had told the other individual that a green truck had just pulled up behind them right before the man shot. He then wanted to know if I had a dash-mounted video camera in my truck, because he thought they might be on the "Dumbest Violators" show.

—WCO RANDY W. PILARCIK, PORTERSVILLE

Makin' Memories

Dave Ulicine took his 9-year-old son Dave Jr. to deer camp, and before daylight on the season opener father and son settled into their treestand. When shooting broke out at daybreak, the youngster turned to his father and said, "Dad, I think the deer are here."

— COMMISSIONER SAMUEL J. DUNKLE, DUNCANSVILLE

Improvised

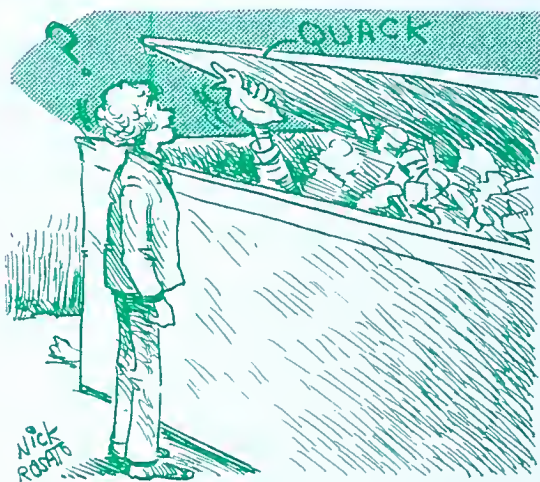
TRAINING SCHOOL — Because of the wet conditions trainees Glen Campbell, Carl Szymanski and I had trouble starting our fire during outdoor survival instruction. We found out that socks burn well, though.

— TRAINEE JASON L. DeCOSKEY, HARRISBURG

Jogged Memory and Wallet

MONROE — During deer season I cited an individual for shooting a deer that had been standing a mere 15 feet from a residence. Luckily, no one was injured, because the individual fired directly towards the rear porch of the home. The violator said that when he shot the deer he didn't even think about what was beyond it. The stiff fines and hunting license revocation should cause him to think in the future.

—WCO PETER F. SUSSENBACK, BLAKESLEE



DUPED

CRAWFORD — Sue DeArment and one of her assistants from the Tamarack Wildlife Rehabilitation Center responded to a call about a duck stranded in a garbage dumpster in Meadville. Hearing the repetitive quacks of the duck, Sue crawled headfirst into the dark dumpster as her assistant held onto her feet. The quacking stopped as the duck was retrieved, only to quack again as Sue squeezed the little yellow toy.

—WCO MARK A. ALLEGRO, MEADVILLE



Different Setting

BEDFORD — Great-horned owls are not normally cavity nesters, but each winter a pair nests in a hollow white oak tree in Shawnee State Park.

— WCO TIM FLANIGAN, BEDFORD

Spider Web

CLARION — A co-worker of Deputy Andy Troutman told him about two bucks he had found with locked antlers, but not in the normal fashion. It seems that one of the bucks had gotten some discarded twine entangled in its antlers, and then, when he fought with the other buck, the twine entangled in the antlers of that one. One of the bucks died and it was only a matter of time before the second one would have perished, and all because of someone's careless litter.

— WCO ALAN C. SCOTT, NEW BETHLEHEM

Special Recipe

SCHUYLKILL — I'm often asked about ways to eliminate the skunk odor from a dog, because that old tomato juice bath just never seems to work. Recently, when my dog got "skunked," I tried a recipe that worked immediately. Here it is: one quart 3 percent hydrogen peroxide, ¼ cup of baking soda, and one teaspoon of liquid soap. Rub the solution into the dog's head and neck area, because that's where they usually get sprayed.

— WCO STEVE HOWER, PINE GROVE

To the Point

SOMERSET — Pleading his case before District Justice Cannoni of Windber about killing a bear on the first day of deer season, the defendant asked Mr. Cannoni what he would have done if a bear had approached to within a few feet of him. The district justice thought for a few seconds and then said, "I don't know what I would have done, but I sure wouldn't have cooked and eaten it."

— WCO SCOTT TOMLINSON, JENNERSTOWN

Quality Time

TRAINING SCHOOL — After spending six hours a week for the last 30 weeks commuting from the northwestern part of the state to the training school with Trainee Clint Deniker, I realized I do only about 10 percent of the talking. That leaves Clint with the other 90 percent. If my math is correct, then that was 162 hours of sleep time for me. The only problem is that I drive every other week.

— TRAINEE DANIEL P. SCHMIDT, HARRISBURG

Bound to Happen

ELK — Neighboring WCO Doty McDowell learned several lessons when a local trapper accidentally caught a river otter. He found out that an otter bites, and handling one is like trying to shake hands with the Tasmanian Devil. He's learned that it's hard to live down looking silly in front of his deputies, but most of all he now knows looking silly in front of a veteran WCO will likely end up as a Field Note.

— WCO RICHARD S. BODENHORN, RIDGWAY

Good Old Days

BERKS — During the winter small game season I met a group of senior hunters on a Farm-Game project and asked if they had had any luck. One fellow said they had taken a few rabbits, but another gentleman excitedly said that in two hours, and without a dog, they had kicked up 18 rabbits. "Who says there's no small game hunting?" the man asked.

— DEPUTY L.J. GALLAGHER, HAMBURG

A First

TRAINING SCHOOL — On the first morning of deer season, WCO Bill Bower, Deputy Charlie Fox and I cited a man for a violation. Later, WCO Bower told me that if you can give a guy a citation and he shakes your hand afterwards, then you know you've done something right. Later that afternoon I cited another hunter, and afterwards I told WCO Bower, "That guy got \$800 in fines, and then he asked me out on a date, so I must be doing a real good job." WCO Bower and Deputy Fox had no answer to that, except to say that that had never happened to them.

— TRAINEE AMY B. GLADFELTER,
HARRISBURG

Team Effort

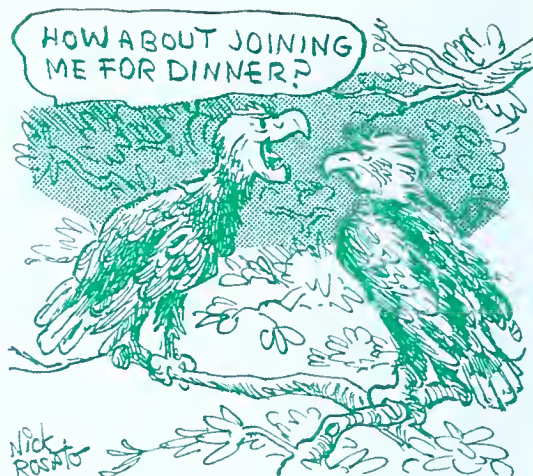
SOMERSET — Two individuals here were prosecuted for possession of several deer that were taken illegally, and they incurred fines and restitution totaling more than \$4,000. The prosecution wouldn't have been possible if it weren't for the assistance of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Forensic Laboratory in Ashland, Oregon, and forensic expert Jim LeMay, who flew in from Oregon to provide testimony on the DNA tests. Also, a big thank you to WCOs Rod Burns, Daniel Jenkins, Stan Norris and Scott Tomlinson for guidance, transportation of individuals and evidence, as well as deputies Mike Boyce and Dave Griffin. I'm also grateful to the State Police in Somerset.

— WCO BRIAN E. WITHERITE, MEYERSDALE

Runnin' On Empty

LYCOMING — One of my neighboring WCOs and I were on our way to Harrisburg to teach a class when his vehicle stalled. We had it towed to a garage, where the mechanic quickly diagnosed the problem. "It's nothing a couple gallons of gasoline can't fix," he said. I guess the "E" stands for something other than "Enough," right, Jay?

— WCO RICHARD E. MACKLEM,
JERSEY SHORE



Adapted

LYCOMING — I was dropping off some roadkilled deer at a pit when I noticed a large bird take off. I thought it was a vulture, because they often frequent the pit, but then I noticed the white head. It seems a bald eagle had found that feasting on roadkilled deer was much easier — and drier — than fishing.

— WCO HAROLD COLE, WILLIAMSPORT

Under the Gun

FULTON — My WCO trainee learned during deer season that when it gets hectic, little things can be overlooked. While checking hunters one day he took me aside and sheepishly said, "I don't know how you're going to take this, but I left my gun at home today." Don't worry, Jim, I won't tell anyone.

— WCO STEPHEN A. LEIENDECKER,
NEEDMORE

Helping Hand

WESTMORELAND — Deputy Wayne Weitzel was looking for a roadkilled deer that had been covered with snow by a plow after a snowstorm when an elderly lady standing on her porch directed him to the deer. The lady then asked Wayne if he would shovel her steps and sidewalk. Once again, a Game Commission volunteer responded to a call above and beyond his duty.

— WCO GARY TOWARD, HYDE PARK

Man convicted for assaulting WCO

KEITH L. MOTTER of Saxton, Huntingdon County, has been sentenced to 23 months supervised probation and ordered to pay \$1,600 in fines and restitution for assaulting an officer with a vehicle, and for illegally riding a motorized "mud buggy" on a game lands. Motter also had his Pennsylvania hunting and furtaking privileges revoked for five years.

On May 27, 2001, as WCO Robert Einodshofer was collecting evidence of illegal vehicle operation on SGL 67, Motter drove up from within the game lands. Motter ignored repeated commands to shut off his ATV. Motter then sped forward, knocking WCO Einodshofer off balance, and

then fled the scene.

Based on information from various sources and a follow-up investigation, a search warrant was served on the Motter residence in July, and the suspect's specially built vehicle was impounded. Charges filed against Motter include: simple assault; reckless endangerment; resisting a state officer; vehicle operation to avoid identification; and unregistered vehicle operation.

On Aug. 16, Motter waived his preliminary hearing in front of District Justice Mary Jamison in Orbisonia. He then pled guilty in Huntingdon County Court of Common Pleas on Nov. 16.

Four eagles found during mid-winter survey at Raystown Lake

THIS PAST JANUARY, Game Commission Southcentral Region Land Management Supervisor Rob Criswell, Southcentral Region Information and Education Supervisor Don Garner and Huntingdon County WCO Phil Lukish, along with Jeff Krause of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Dr. Tom Serfass, Frostburg University biologist, located two adult bald eagles wintering on the lake. In addition, Huntingdon County WCO John Roller sighted two other adult eagles hunting the Juniata River directly below the lake spillway.

Although up to eight eagles have

been recorded in past winters, Criswell commented that the four found this January is probably not indicative of a downward trend.

"Being such a relatively warm winter, eagles may not have come this far south to fish open water," Criswell said. "Also, one of our adult sightings was near the new eagle nest on the lake. This would indicate that if the resident eagles are on the lake, the juveniles hatched at the nest may have been around, too. But, we count only actual sightings."

Last year, the pair raised a single eaglet. In 1999, three were raised at the same nest.

Turkey restoration continues in southeast

THE WILD TURKEY restoration efforts continued this past winter when 260 wild turkeys were planned for release at 13 sites in Turkey Management Area 9A. In 2001, the Game Commission and state chapters of the NWTF transferred 230 wild turkeys (168 females, 62 males) to 10 release sites in Berks, Chester, Lancaster and York counties.

"We release turkeys at an approximate sex ratio of three females for each male, because turkeys are polygamous (one male breeds several fe-

males)," said Mary Jo Casalena, PGC wild turkey biologist. "Each of this year's 13 sites will receive 15 to 20 turkeys."

All turkeys are from in-state trapings. WCOs and deputies, working with NWTF volunteers, trapped turkeys on private and public lands (except TMAs 7B and 9A) where landowners want turkeys to be trapped or where turkey hunting opportunities are limited. If this year's releases are successful, this will complete restoration efforts in TMA 9A.

Annual PGC report presented to house committee

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Vern Ross delivered the agency's annual report to the House Game and Fisheries Committee at an informational meeting this past February.

During his presentation, Ross highlighted deer management, habitat improvement work, and the agency's long-range strategic plan.

"Without a doubt, deer management is the most prominent topic for the Game Commission," Ross said. "The Game Commission, and most notably Dr. Gary Alt, are continuing to reach out to the public. It's a tre-

mendous undertaking, involving dozens of public presentations around the state — many of which hosted by members of this committee — videos, brochures, television call-in programs, interviews and more.

"As we continue to learn more about deer and deer behavior, as well as hunters and hunter behavior, we will be able to fine-tune the deer management program to meet the needs of our customers, while still remaining true to our obligation to properly manage the deer herd for all Pennsylvanians," Ross said. He also pointed

CONTACTING THE REGION OFFICES

Northwest — 877-877-0299

Southwest — 877-877-7137

Northcentral — 877-877-7674

Southcentral — 877-877-9107

Northeast — 877-877-9357

Southeast — 877-877-9470

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.

out that the Game Commission has begun to develop new management units to better manage all wildlife, including deer.

In the area of habitat improvement, Ross emphasized that during fiscal year 2000-01, the Game Commission was required by legislated mandate to spend \$5,784,030 on habitat improvement. Turned out, during the fiscal year, the agency actually spent \$10,474,203, almost twice what's required by law.

Ross also noted that the Game Commission continues to work to enroll landowners in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), a partnership between the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Pennsylvania designed to enroll 100,000 acres of highly erodible cropland and buffers within 180 feet of a stream in a 20-county region of southcentral and southeastern Pennsylvania for 10 to 15 years.

"As of January 11, 2,500 landowners have offered nearly 81,000 acres for enrollment in CREP," Ross said. "If we continue on the current trend, we will reach our authorized cap by June 30, well before the September 30, 2002 deadline."

"Additionally, if we achieve the 100,000-acre cap before September, I intend to seek approval to expand this program to the remaining 21 counties in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed and request an additional 50,000 acres. We also plan to seek approval to develop other CREP contracts for the Ohio River Basin and the Delaware River Basin."

To showcase the habitat improve-

ment projects being conducted by the Game Commission and its many partners, Ross invited the members of the committee to join him in his third round of state game lands tours, which will begin later this year.

The agency's strategic plan is another item members of the committee are interested in. "As the agency's strategic plan is set for renewal in 2003, the Game Commission began preparing an updated plan in 2000," Ross said. "The agency developed a blueprint for developing a strategic plan through 2008 and, in 2001, we hired Carl Roe of Wayne, Pennsylvania, who had retired from the U.S. Army with the rank of colonel.

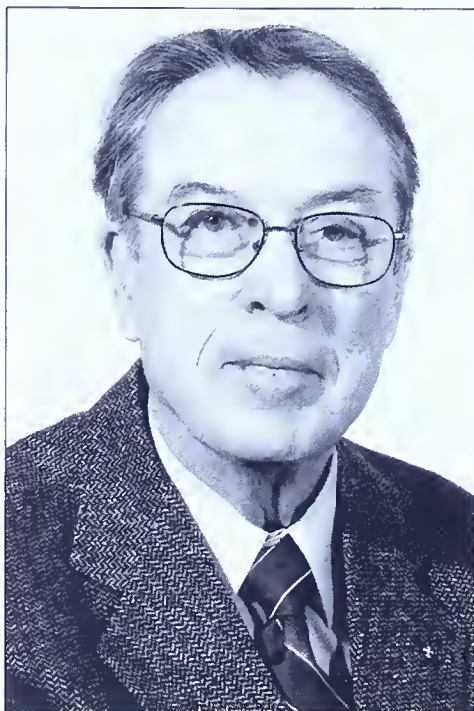
"Our philosophy concerning the development of a strategic plan is not about having a product, but about getting results," Roe said. "Many of us have seen strategic plans that are completed, placed on the shelf and not looked at again until the next planning cycle.

"Our plan is oriented to the development of programs that will ensure the fulfillment of our mission while keeping in mind the concerns of our many stakeholders."

As part of the annual report submitted to the General Assembly, Ross provided updates on the agency's efforts to improve services to the public, as well as program, financial and law enforcement accountability. The format of the Game Commission's report to the General Assembly is spelled out in the Game and Wildlife Code. The agency also provides the public with a broader annual report, in every January issue of *Game News*.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

Riley sworn in as new commissioner



JOHN J. RILEY of Scotrun, Monroe County, has been sworn-in as a member of the Game Commission. The ceremony took place in February, at the Game Commission's Northeast Region Office, and was conducted by District Justice C. William Dennis, of Tobyhanna.

Riley was nominated to the Board by Governor Tom Ridge last September. He was unanimously confirmed by the Pennsylvania Senate on January 22, 2002. Riley fills the vacant

seat for District 7, which comprises Carbon, Luzerne, Lackawanna, Monroe, Pike, Susquehanna, Wayne and Wyoming counties. His term expires on June 9, 2006.

"I would like to thank the Governor and the Senate for this opportunity to serve the people of northeastern Pennsylvania," said Commissioner Riley. "I plan to represent the views of this area on the Board, and I plan to consider each issue with an open mind.

"It is my belief that the Game Commission is headed in the right direction. However, there always is room for improvement, and I look forward to being part of the effort to make improvements where needed."

A veteran of the U.S. Air Force, Riley has served as an officer with the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsman's Clubs, the Pennsylvania Wildlife Federation, the Institute of Conservation Leadership, the Broadhead Watershed Association and the Kettle Creek Environmental Fund.

A certified public accountant, Riley is President of John J. Riley Inc., a professional firm of business advisors and accountants. In 2000, Riley was the winner of the Distinguished Public Service Award from the Penn-

A "Nature Art and Outdoor Sports Festival" is being held Saturday and Sunday, April 20 and 21, at the Hidden Valley Resort, on Route 31 west of Somerset. In addition to more than 65 wildlife artists will be many activities, programs and other events to make for a fine family outing. Seminar speakers include Ben Moyer, new *Game News* contributor; Joe Stefko, Southwest Region Wildlife Education Supervisor; elk biologist Rawley Cogan; PGC biologist Mary Jo Casalena; and WCO Rod Ansell. Admission is \$5. Children under 10 are free, with a paying adult. Festival hours both days will be 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

sylvania Institute of Certified Public Accountants.

Riley also serves on the executive board of the Boy Scouts of America and has served as a Little League Baseball coach and manager for more than 12 years.

In 1960, he graduated with an associate degree in accounting from Churchman Business School,

Northampton County. Riley returned to school three decades later and earned his bachelor of fine arts degree in Organizational Management from Eastern College, Delaware County, in 1998.

A native of Pocono Township, Riley lives there with his wife, Phyllis. They have eight grown children and 10 grandchildren.

SHARON ALT was presented with a "Certificate of Appreciation" in recognition of her tireless dedication to promoting the PGC's deer management initiatives. As anybody who has attended one of her husband's programs will attest, Sharon is truly a woman behind the scenes who, like so many PGC volunteers, gives so much to the Game Commission. Northeast Region Director Barry Warner, left, made the presentation, with Gary Alt looking on.



2001 Youth Essay Contest winners announced

TWO Teenagers are heading West on trips of a lifetime as the grand prize winners in the Game Commission's 2001 Youth Essay Contest.

Senior Division winner Ben K. Hoover, 16, Malvern, and Junior Division winner Josh Williams, 15, Oil City, led their respective divisions. The contest, held annually to stimulate interest among youngsters to be conscientious and responsible hunters, attracts from 200 to 400 submissions. This year's theme was: "Ways I Can Promote Hunting."

Williams will receive a scholarship to Safari Club International's Apprentice Hunter Camp at the historic Y.O. Ranch near Mountain Home, Texas. Hoover will head to Safari Club International's American Wilderness

Leadership School in Jackson, Wyoming.

SCI, which has more than 400 chapters worldwide, provides money and manpower for local wildlife research, management and conservation education programs. Coupled with its sister organization, Safari Club International Foundation, SCI represents more than one million people and is proud of the American tradition of wildlife conservation by hunters.

Hoover and Williams, as well as first and second place finishers in each division, were recognized at the January Board of Game Commissioners meeting. Each received a plaque, as well as prizes.

In the senior division, first place

finisher Lindsey R. Stauffer, 16, Lititz, won a scholarship to Pennsylvania State University's Conservation Leadership School. Second place finisher Adam J. Petrick, 17, McKeesport, won a 2-day pheasant hunt. Chelsea M. Wills, Ashville, took third place and received a Lyman 54-caliber flintlock rifle. Fourth place finisher Kristen Schnepf, Erie, received a pair of Sightron Series II 8x40 binoculars.

In the junior division, first place finisher Meredith Ann Odato, 15, Landisburg, won a scholarship to the NWTF's Conservation Field Day in Edgefield, South Carolina. Second place winner Marlena C. Lipko, 12, Slippery Rock, won a 2-day pheasant hunt. Third place finisher Nathan D. Laughman of Hanover, received a Thompson-Center 50-caliber flintlock rifle. Fourth place winner Jessica E. Demyan, Clarence, received a pair of Sightron Series II 8x40 binoculars.

"It's always a pleasure to recognize young people who take the initiative

to make a difference," noted Keith Snyder, Hunter-Trapper Education Division chief. "They support and enjoy hunting, are willing to try to make the sport better and care enough to get involved with the recruitment of new hunters. Their efforts are truly commendable. Their parents, as well as all Pennsylvania hunters, should be proud of them. I know the Game Commission is."

All prizes were sponsored by the Pennsylvania chapters of SCI; the Pennsylvania chapters of the NWTF; the Pennsylvania Deer Association; H&R 1871 Inc. firearms manufacturer; Marlin rifle maker; Sightron optics maker; and On-Point Outfitters of Confluence.

Details for the 2002 Hunter Education Youth Essay Contest will be included in the 2002-03 *Pennsylvania Digest of Hunting and Trapping Regulations*, an upcoming *Game News* and on the agency's website at www.pgc.state.pa.us.

"Ways I Can Promote Hunting"

AS A HUNTER and outdoorsman, I understand I have many obligations to my sport. For hunting to survive, I must help promote a positive image of hunting and trapping, both for management and recreational purposes. To better cultivate support for hunting I need look no further than the conservation practices of my idol, Theodore Roosevelt. I believe the best way for me to promote hunting is to represent the sport in the same manner as he did: as a gentleman and ethical sportsman.

The simplest way I can foster support for hunting is to become involved in my community. Showing people that hunters were the first conservationists is one step I have taken, both



BEN K. HOOVER, Senior Grand Prize Winner, is on his way to SCI's American Wilderness Leadership School in Wyoming. Winners of the Game Commission's 2001 Youth Essay Contest were honored at the January Commission meeting.

in school projects and in casual conversation. When explaining hunting to a nonhunter, I always explain the special, sacred ritual of the hunt and how I am helping to control a burgeoning deer population. Finally, I reveal that I am enrolled in Hunters/Farmers Sharing the Harvest, and half of my meat will help feed the needy.

However, interaction with the nonhunting population is not the only way to promote hunting. My duties include policing our own ranks to keep sportsmen ethical. Hunting cannot be furthered by those who fail to respect the quarry or its habitat. I can also remind unethical hunters that they are damaging our image with the general public, not to mention setting a poor example for the hunters of the future.

Information is the key to hunting's future, and I will do everything possible to educate my peers about the important role hunters play in our environment. In my future career as a hunter and conservationist I will always promote hunting to the best of my abilities, showing that it is valuable as a management tool and as a recreational pursuit. — *Ben K. Hoover, Senior Grand Prize Winner*

THERE ARE three ways I feel are important for promoting hunting. They are talking to others, joining an organization, and being a safe hunter.

What I mean about talking to others is to talk to them about previous hunting adventures. These hunting adventures might make someone think about how they wish they could experience it one day. If they start hunting they would have their own to share with others. This could cause a chain reaction which over time would help promote hunting. This idea could take time but it would spread fast.

Another way to promote safe hunting is by joining an organization such as the National Wild turkey Federation or Ducks Unlimited. Much of the money that is put into the organization goes into the conservation of the outdoors and to promote hunting. This is also a good way to meet other avid hunters.

I think by being a hunter you're promoting hunting. Every time you step into the woods, you're showing respect to the laws and to nature. If others see how serious you are then they too will begin to respect hunting and decide it's something they should do.

In conclusion, I've found there are several ways I can promote hunting. What I didn't realize is that I have promoted hunting for years by simply sharing my hunting experiences around the school lunch table with friends. I know at least one of my friends is now hunting from me sharing my hunting experiences. Hopefully I will encourage more in the future. — *Josh Williams, Junior Grand Prize Winner*



JOSH WILLIAMS, Junior Grand Prize Winner, is on his way to the Y.O. Ranch near Mountain Home, Texas. With Williams are Donald L. Fetterolf, left, from SCI, and PGC Commissioner Nicholas Spock and Executive Director Vern Ross.



Off the Wire

by Bob D'Angelo

ARKANSAS

A work crew in Hot Springs got caught in a thunderstorm and received a mild shock from a nearby lightning strike, but then had to start dodging ducks, as about 20 mallards fell from the sky. The unfortunate birds seemingly got too close to the strike.

WISCONSIN

State and federal officials are investigating the killing of four timber wolves during Wisconsin's deer season. In Wisconsin, wolves are on the state threatened species list and on the federal endangered species list. One shooter has been arrested, and \$4,000 in rewards have been posted for information leading to the apprehension and conviction of those responsible for the other wolf killings. About 250 wolves were counted in Wisconsin in late winter 2001. Timber wolves moved into Wisconsin from Minnesota in 1971.

HUNTER NUMBERS

The number of hunters in the U.S. has remained fairly steady, with 15 million buying licenses in 2000, closely mirroring the 15.1 million in 1999. Expenditures, however, were in excess of \$613.9 million for hunting licenses in 2000, up from \$580.2 million the year before.

OHIO

An estimated 22,270 hunters pursued wild turkeys in Ohio during the fall 2000 season, taking 2,407. The Buckeye State's turkey population now exceeds 260,000 birds. The first fall turkey season in Ohio took place in 1996.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

There were 419 moose taken in New Hampshire during 2001. The success rate was 72 percent — up from 2000's 65 percent. The largest bull weighed 910 pounds.

MISSOURI

Hunters bagged 13,554 wild turkeys during the 2001 fall season — up 324 from 2000. The number of birds taken during the 2-week fall season is modest compared to the spring season. Last year's spring harvest was more than 55,000 birds.

VENISON ALTERNATIVE

A 3-ounce serving of venison has only 134 calories and three grams of fat, significantly less than beef, which has 259 calories and 18 grams of fat.

LOUISIANA

Squirrels are the most popular small game species in Louisiana. In 2001, 107,000 hunters harvested 1.6 million bushytails.

ACCIDENTAL FIREARM FATALITIES

Accidental firearm fatalities declined dramatically in 2000, according to the National Shooting Sports Foundation, falling to an all-time low 600, which is 25 percent less than in 1999.

Another View

By Linda Steiner

Despite her years of hunting experience, Linda found out the hard way that one can never be too prepared.

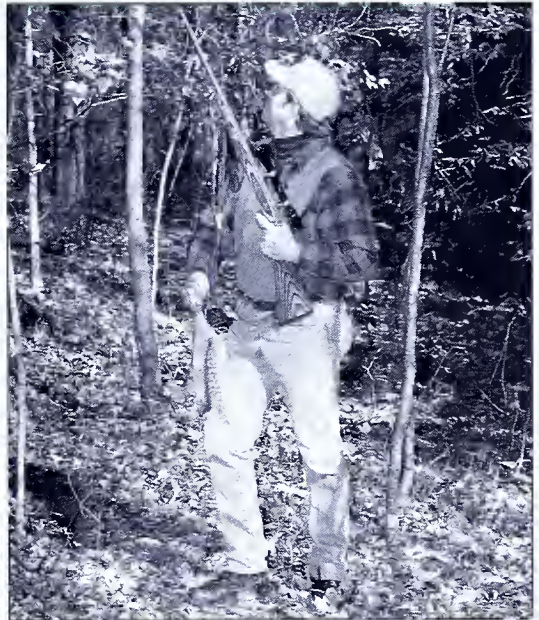
How I Got That Scar

“WHAT HAPPENED to you?” I was tired of hearing that. For two weeks friends had been asking me that question. I realized I had a couple black eyes and a scabbed-over gash on the bridge of my nose. And that my wire-rimmed glasses were bent out of shape. I knew that make-up wasn't covering the puffy swelling. I didn't need to be reminded.

What happened to me? I had gone deer hunting, and I got a deer.

I had an antlerless tag to fill and was moving up a hollow, toward some of the others in our group, alternately still-hunting and sitting. I decided that a half hour on stand was in order, so I sat down with my back against a snag. Around me were young trees several inches thick. I could grasp one and use it as a gun rest, if I got a shot. I eased out of my daypack and snacked on my last granola bar. A rustle uphill became a half dozen wild turkeys sailing over my head. The birds didn't go far, and soon I could hear them clucking and whistling to each other. They were making the otherwise gameless day interesting.

I don't know what made me turn sharply to the left; the deer must have made some sound. The doe was suddenly there, walking between some hemlocks and a dense



Bob Steiner

A FEW basic emergency items in a hunter's coat pocket or daypack could come in handy if he stumbles, gets a blister, or is "scope-bit."

timber cut. I would have scant seconds to shoot before she was gone. Still sitting, I twisted around and leaned against one of the saplings. For some reason I was having trouble seeing through the scope. I moved enough to get a clear picture and she was in my sights. I tightened the trigger and got smacked between the eyes. I couldn't

see again. This time the problem wasn't the scope; it was my glasses. They had been knocked cockeyed and seemed to be stuck to me. I pulled on them and peered through the sights in time to see the deer scrambling and falling into a ravine. Something warm was running down my face. I got to my feet unsteadily and moved toward where the deer had fallen. I reached into my pocket for a handkerchief to mop the blood, my blood.

The deer was dead, so I could attend to myself. I cleaned up, wiping blood from my glasses and the edge of my gun scope and from the bridge of my nose. I could feel the wet wound and knew I'd been split open between the eyes. I pressed the handkerchief against my forehead. I wanted to make sure I stopped my own bleeding before I got my hands into the blood of the deer. I didn't want to risk cross-contamination by touching my face after I'd begun field-dressing. Surprisingly, my injury didn't hurt. Or maybe I was just too keyed up to notice.

I figured I'd be black and blue and probably end up with a dandy scar. I was and I did, but fortunately my new glasses hide it. My hunting buddies laugh when I complain about my scope scar. "That's nothing," they say. "Take a look at mine." Quite a few of them can point to marks between their eyes or low on their forehead where they "didn't get into the gun right." Like me, they didn't have the stock shouldered correctly or were leaning too far forward toward the scope. They, too, got "bit" by the recoil of the high-powered rifle or slug shotgun. The resulting scar may not be a "red badge of courage," but it does show as a "little white crescent of error." I suppose it marks us (literally) as hunters and shooters who are imperfect human beings who make mistakes.

My scope scar is a minimal price to pay for a mishap in the field. When talk goes round to "hunting accidents," the first thought is of firearm wounds. Yet gunfire-related injuries are few and are far outnumbered

by misadventures like mine. Of my hunting acquaintances, who number in the hundreds, including outdoor writers who spend a lot of time afield, I know just two who were shot while hunting. Both were shot in mistake for game (both recovered) while turkey hunting, before the fluorescent orange rules. I know a lot more people who have been involved in auto accidents.

I suppose you could say that a firearm hurt me that day, but the gun itself injured me, not by what issues from its front end. I could have done the same, or worse, to myself by walking into a twig at eye-level.

Thinking about the incident later, I was surprised that my glass lenses hadn't broken. I am extremely near-sighted. If my glasses had busted, I would have been wandering blurry woods, not only trying to find the deer I'd shot at, but having real problems getting back to the car. I had a daypack with me. Why didn't I carry extra glasses? I have several old pairs and keep a spare in the vehicle, so I can still drive if I break or lose my good glasses. My glasses and case are small and lightweight. Why wasn't I carrying them with me that day? And why didn't I have even a Band-Aid?

In the last few years, I have become a mountain hiker and backpacker, mostly to the wilderness of the Adirondack Mountains of northeastern New York. So far the longest I've been "back in," backpack tenting and living off trail mix and dehydrated dinners, is five days. I spend a lot of time and thought before each trip planning what I need (and whittling down its weight to a minimum) to not only enjoy myself but, in case of accident or illness, to survive in the backcountry. I always carry spare glasses on backpack treks, because I know what a misstep on the rocks or just stumbling over my own tired feet could do. Certainly the same things could happen to me while hunting.

Few hunters I know carry first aid or emergency items with them. After all, they're only going for a few hours and they'll be back the same evening. Being

injured by the gun scope made me realize that I need to prepare for hunting the way I prepare for hiking. I don't need to be ready for every possible emergency, but I should take along a few simple items that can make the difference between real trouble and just a little discomfort, or maybe no discomfort at all.

Hunting coats usually have generous pockets for gear, and many sportsmen tote daypacks for hunting accessories, anyway. To the usual "hunting stuff" I carry, I'm going to add, number one, spare glasses. Plus a few Band-Aids and a small, sealed packet of pre-moistened handi-wipes, for cleaning a wound.

When I hike, I take a small gauze compress and a short length of bandage tape, for larger scrapes or cuts, and this little package will also go into my hunting pack. I also carry a tiny plastic bottle of saline solution (available in many brand names), for flushing grit and rinsing other eye irritations. My small Swiss army knife has a scissors and tweezers, which I have used for thorns and splinters that could have ruined an outing.

This past winter, while cross-country skiing, I developed a nasty blister. Back at

the warming hut, I pulled off my sock to look at the place on my ankle that had been painning me all morning. The blister had been deep and it had already broken. The spot was raw and sore. I figured I was done skiing for the day. The ski instructor noticed my dilemma and came to the rescue.

He cut to shape and applied a patch of "new skin," a thin, moist, gelatinous membrane, over the blister. This he covered with duct tape. I could not only lace up and walk in the ski boot, but I skied eight more miles of Nordic trails that afternoon, in comfort. From now on, a slim pack of Second Skin or other

brand of blister treatment cushions will go in the pocket of my skiing jacket and into my hunting daypack.

Blisters, scrapes, splinters and even "scope bites" may not ruin a day afield, but they can take away a lot of enjoyment and possibly develop into infection or a longer healing time, if not treated promptly. My recent outdoor injuries were more useful than damaging. From now on I'll be better prepared to handle similar situations. Because these take up practically no room, I think I'll add a couple more that are as important as the rest: aspirins. □

Blisters, scrapes, splinters and even "scope bites" may not ruin a day afield, but they can take away a lot of enjoyment.

Books in Brief

(Not available from the Game Commission.)

Field Dressing and Butchering Big Game, by Monte Burch, available from The Lyons Press, 246 Goose Lane, P.O. Box 480, Guilford, CT 06437, www.lyonspress, 200 pp., hardcover, \$19.95 plus \$4.50 shipping & handling. This complete handbook demonstrates the techniques for field-dressing, skinning and quartering big game animals in the field, basic butchering techniques, and a guide to the equipment you'll need to get started. The author devotes separate chapters to a variety of big game animals, and he also shares some of his favorite recipes.

The Naturalist's Eye

By Marcia Bonta

That old saying "To be seen and not heard" doesn't apply to birdwatching. Oftentimes you'll hear a bird's song, and then, if you're lucky, you'll spot it.

An Aural April



ON A QUIET foggy morning in early April I could barely make out the trail in front of me, so I set out on a listening walk.

The first sounds I heard were the assorted whistles of a flock of red-winged blackbirds that filled up several of our black walnut trees. These birds always visit us during foggy days in early spring.

I also heard the cheerful singing of Carolina wrens, the *cheer, cheer, cheerily* of American robins, the *wicka-wicka* call of a northern flicker, and the excitable *churring* of a red-bellied woodpecker. Song sparrows flew back and forth from the weed tops of First Field, and American goldfinches gave their *per-chik-o-ree* flight calls as they navigated overhead.

Down along our road I glimpsed a pair of Louisiana water thrushes through the

fog. One scolded on a branch above the stream. Two days earlier, as I walked up our road, I had heard their ringing, cascading song that outcompetes rushing stream water. On this day, though, they seemed to be silenced by the fog.

Not so the first returning blue-headed (formerly solitary) vireo. His louder, more definitive rendition of the red-eyed vireo's song is also higher in pitch, and that morning it rang from the woods above the stream.

Sitting on the Hunters' Bench beneath huge Norway spruces that dripped with condensed fog, I listened to the syncopated drumming of a pileated woodpecker, the musical, rising *chur-lee* of an eastern bluebird, and the buzzy trilling song of a chipping sparrow.

I walked up the Steiner/Scott Trail and was stopped in my tracks by a ruffed grouse drumming so close that I could hear its reverberations, yet I couldn't locate him or his drumming log, even though I sat and listened and peered through the fog at all the likely places. Instead, I was rewarded by the first singing ruby-crowned kinglet of the year. His song, a complex series of

notes and warbles, always ends with *look-at-me, look-at-me, look-at-me*, although I couldn't see him either.

Next I heard the cat-like mew of a yellow-bellied sapsucker and spotted him through the fog, sipping sap from a hickory tree that was encircled by old sap wells and overhung with grapevines.

A deer loomed like a specter ahead in the fog as I reached the Sapsucker Ridge Trail, but it noticed my silhouette and fled. Squirrels scolded unseen. At the Far Field a field sparrow sang his plaintive, minor key song the entire time I circled the field on Pennyroyal Trail. A turkey gobbled below me, but I couldn't locate it. A northern cardinal sang its brilliant *clear, clear, pretty, pretty, pretty* song. An eastern towhee called *che-wink*, and a white-breasted nuthatch yanked from a nearby tree trunk. Still, the turkey gobbled, stopping only when I continued my walk. I couldn't see him, but I bet he saw me.

By the time I reached the Far Field Road visibility had widened to only 100 feet. Below the road another unseen grouse drummed. Along First Field Trail I heard the liquid, quiet, burbling song of a brown-headed cowbird.

When I finally walked back into our yard, three hours after I started, towhees, cardinals, field sparrows, Carolina wrens, red-winged blackbirds, chipping sparrows, goldfinches and song sparrows called and sang in the still thick fog. After an almost silent winter, I welcomed the swelling chorus of songbirds, both residents and migrants.

In April, if I'm lucky, I hear the songs of some of our wintering birds before they move on to their breeding grounds — the lilting

warbles of American tree sparrows, the haunting *Oh Canada, sweet Canada, Canada, Canada* of white-throated sparrows, and the musical trills of dark-eyed juncos. I'm also delighted to hear what I think of as the inverted eastern meadowlark song of brown creepers, and the tinkling, trilling song of winter wrens that goes on as long as 10 seconds, making it the longest song of any bird in eastern North America.

Our year-round residents also tune their pipes which, except for the Carolina wrens, have been relegated to only calls for many months. *Tut-tutting* robins metamorphize into brilliant choristers; the *dee-dee-dees* of black-capped chickadees change to musical *fee-bees*. Tufted titmice *peter-peter* and mourning doves *coo*.

Best of all are the returning birds, and I tick them off day after day by their songs — the thin, squeaky *zee-zees* of blue-gray gnatcatchers, the *wee-za, wee-za, wee-zas* of black-and-white warblers, the *witchedy, witchedy, witchedys* of common yellowthroats, and the “robin-with-a-cold-in-his-throat” of scarlet tanagers.

Then there are the brown thrashers, the most versatile of all American songbirds.

Last April a male returned on April 16 and by the 21 he was courting a female in



the guesthouse backyard. We sat outside after dinner and listened to unending thrasher diversity, each song repeated twice, a distinct pause, and then on to a new one. They only occasionally mimic other species and, unlike northern mockingbirds, their imitations are not very good.

So far, researchers have documented between 1,000 and 2,000 songs, depending on which researchers you listen to. Not only that, but brown thrashers actually sing two songs simultaneously, even though they emerge from their throats as a single song, according to Barry Kent MacKay in his informative book *Bird Songs*.

Every year brown thrashers learn more songs, despite singing only during a brief period each spring as they establish territories and attract mates. Most males hold forth exuberantly from exposed perches, their tails pointing down, making it easy to see as well as hear them.

Even on clear days, most birds are not as cooperative as thrashers, so I continue to use my ears as much as my eyes. On one cold, windy morning I listened to juncos as I sat on Bird Count Trail. Suddenly, I heard a hissing sound. Through an understory of blackberry canes I spotted a displaying ruffed grouse, his tail fanned out as he shook his black ruff and then rushed at a robin on the ground nearby until it saw me and flew off.

I heard and then saw some tussling in the Japanese barberry shrubs to my left, and two male towhees emerged almost at my feet. The one in the lead picked up a twig, carried it a few feet, dropped it, hopped a few feet farther and flew. The second towhee flew back near the barberry shrubs. Both continued calling, but the one nearby sang a few bars of *drink your tea*. Later, I learned that I had witnessed “debris-carrying,” which is performed by a subordinate bird during territorial boundary disputes.

The climax to my aural April occurred on the 24, when our son Dave interrupted my breakfast at 7 a.m. “Mom, come quick.

A hermit thrush is singing on Laurel Ridge.”

Although I see hermit thrushes during both the spring and fall migrations, they rarely sing, and when they do, their songs are brief. So I didn’t have much hope as I dropped everything, pulled on my hiking boots and, with my apron still tied around my waist, ran up Guesthouse Trail behind Dave.

But three-quarters of the way up the ridge, the hermit thrush was still singing. He was so close that we heard every nuance of his ethereal song. Then, a particularly strident blue-headed vireo began to sing, silencing the hermit thrush. I continued to the top of the ridge and turned right on Laurel Ridge Trail. After a couple hundred feet, I heard the hermit thrush singing again and sat down as reverently as if I were in a church to listen to his “organ-like” tones. For a short time, he sang a solo. Then the first ovenbird of the year piped up with his far inferior *tea-cher, tea-cher, tea-cher* song and two blue-headed vireos, one on either side of the hermit thrush, joined in. This time the hermit thrush was not deterred by its competition. He was clearly the master and the other birds mere apprentices and they quickly subsided.

I listened as he sang, but slowly the volume lessened as he moved farther along the ridge. After half an hour, the concert was over. I never even caught a glimpse of him. He remained an enchanting, disembodied voice in the spring forest.

The late Sigurd Olson, in his book *The Listening Point* wrote, “Everyone has a listening point somewhere . . . some place of quiet where the universe can be contemplated with awe . . .” His listening point was on the remote shore of a North Woods’ lake in Minnesota. Mine is on a mountain in Pennsylvania’s ridge-and-valley province, especially in spring when hearing birds, like hermit thrushes and our resident wood thrushes, is even better than seeing them. □

Straight from the Bowstring

By P.J. Reilly

If you're looking for a new archery challenge, or you want to improve your shooting skills, try "hunting" the good old bullseye.

Hitting a Bullseye

I THINK I was about 10 when my dad came home from the high school, where he was the assistant principal, with an old recurve bow and a handful of beat up arrows. They were rejects from his school's physical education department, and they became mine.

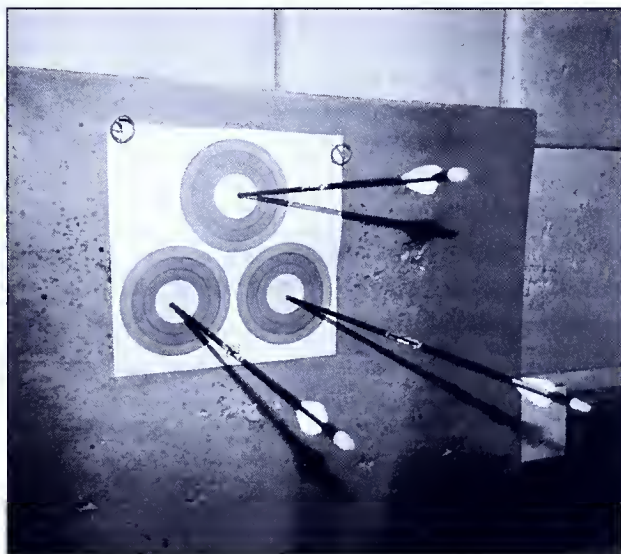
I remember how thrilled I was as I ran my hands over the beige and black bow's weathered fiberglass limbs. The scratched, black plastic handgrip was a bit large for my tiny hands, but it felt good in the seat of my palm. The bow had no string, so I cut a piece of cord off the drawstring curtain rod in my bedroom. (Mom would have killed me if she knew about that.)

After tying loops on each end, I strung the bow, pulled the string back part way and let it go. The *twang* was sweet music to my ears. A large appliance box made a good target holder, and I put it out in the yard and taped a piece of notebook paper to one side. In the center of the paper I colored a large black dot with a magic marker. That was my bullseye.

SHOOTING BULLSEYES is still as much fun as ever, and it's a great way for 3-D shooters and bowhunters to fine-tune aiming skills.

My first few shots barely hit the box, let alone the dot. Again and again I launched arrows at the box from a distance of about 10 feet. After 40 or 50 shots the box was riddled with holes — except in the bullseye.

It wasn't until a day or two later that one of the arrows left my bow and made a beeline for the center of the target. The sound the arrow made when it hit the bullseye was no different than the sound it made the countless other times I had hit the box. The feeling, however, the sound evoked from me when the arrow struck that dot for the first time was strong. I felt good. I felt powerful.





THIS BOW has special equipment used solely for target archery. It has a long stabilizer and extended sight bar for improved stability and accuracy.

From a popularity standpoint, 3-D shooting is king in the archery world these days. Archery clubs make a financial killing by holding public 3-D shoots in the weeks preceding the archery deer season. Take a drive through rural areas and you're likely to see life-size, foam deer targets perched against backstops in more than a few backyards. Everybody wants to shoot 3-Ds, and why not? A lifesize replica of the animal you're planning to pursue is a super tool for sharpening your skills.

What about the old bullseye target? Is it a relic in the archery world today? It doesn't have to be. Shooting bullseyes is still as much fun as ever, and it's a great way for 3-D shooters and bowhunters to fine-tune aiming skills.

Shooting a bullseye target can be as simple as pasting a piece of paper to a backstop in the backyard. Draw a center circle on the paper and have at it. This is a great way to kill a few hours, while working on your archery skills.

For those of you with a competitive spirit, however, bullseye target archery is alive and well in Pennsylvania. Many local archery shops and clubs with shooting lanes run evening and weekend leagues and tournaments. On a grander scale, the

Pennsylvania State Archery Association, National Field Archery Association, and North East Tournament Archery Association all hold sanctioned shoots throughout the year in Pennsylvania. To find out when these organizations hold their shoots, simply type their names into any search engine on the Internet and check out their websites.

How can shooting at bullseye targets make you a better all around archer? Here's a simple test that demonstrates the benefits. Take your hunting bow outside, draw it back and aim it at a 3-D target. You will probably have no problem holding your sight pin on the target's ample vital area. Now, take your bow, draw

it back and aim at the center of a bullseye target. You're likely to notice that it's a little more difficult keeping that pin glued to the comparatively smaller bullseye.

Bullseye targets enable a shooter to develop a rock-steady aiming ability. And when you're able to aim with such precision, you'll be able to shoot with pinpoint accuracy. Pinpoint accuracy is the goal of both bowhunters and target archers.

Specialized equipment can help a shooter become a better target archer, but there's nothing wrong with using hunting gear. The basic act of shooting at a bullseye target is no different than shooting at a deer or at a 3-D target. Shooting is shooting. However, if you're out shooting your 70-pound, compound hunting bow at a bullseye target, you might find your bow arm fatigues fairly quickly. That's to be expected. Each time you shoot, you're putting a lot of strain on that bow arm as you hold a full draw while trying to lock your sight pin on the center of the target. Lower the draw weight by 10 to 20 pounds and you're likely to find you can shoot a lot longer. Also, if you normally shoot with a quiver attached to your bow, remove the quiver.

If you decide you want to dive headfirst

into target archery, you might want to consider having a target bow. Most hunting bows made today are built for speed, which is not as critical for “hunting” bullseyes as it is for hunting deer or 3-Ds.

The distance between a bow’s riser and the string is called the brace height. Bows with low brace heights are extremely fast, but they’re not as forgiving as bows with greater brace heights. Every mistake the shooter makes with a bow with a short brace height is amplified. Speed bows also have wildly oblong cams, which are more difficult to draw than bows with more round wheels. As a target archer, you want a forgiving bow, and you want a bow that draws easily. Typically, this means you want a bow with round wheels.

As I said earlier, there’s no need for a heavy draw weight on a target bow. After all, when shooting at a bullseye target, there’s no guessing how far you’re shooting. One of the benefits of a bow with a heavy draw weight to 3-D shooters and bowhunters is the arrow speed generated by the bow allows the archers to be less than perfect when they have to guess the distance to their targets. Bullseye archers know exactly how far away their targets are. Depending on your strength, a bow with a draw weight in the 45- to 60-pound range will do.

For arrows, most of the bullseye archers I know shoot 2512 aluminum shafts. The “25” refers to the circumference of the arrow, while the “12” is a measurement of the inner thickness of the arrow. The 2512 shaft is the fattest arrow on the market, making it the ideal “line-cutter.” In bullseye tournaments, all you have to do is touch the line of a scoring ring to earn the points awarded by that ring. So, even if your whole arrow is inside the 9-point ring, if it’s touching the outside edge of the 10-point ring, you’ve shot a 10. With this scoring system, it’s easy to see why a fat arrow comes in handy.

Stabilizers are a big help to bullseye archers. These are weights that you attach

to the front of your bow, beneath the handle, to help you hold the bow steady when you’re aiming. Stabilizers vary in length from just a few inches, to about three feet. The longer the stabilizer, the easier it is to hold the bow steady. But the longer stabilizers also tend to be heavier than the shorter ones, so you’re holding more weight up at full draw. You have to find what’s comfortable for you.

There are essentially two types of sights — pins and scopes. Pins include any fixed aiming point that does not provide any magnification of the target. Scopes are round tubes with glass centers that may or may not magnify the target. When choosing a sight, take a look at the bar that holds the sight. The longer the bar, the farther away from the riser the sight will be. And the farther away from the riser the sight is, the harder it is to steady that sight on the target. But it’s a more precise sight.

Here’s a simple test to demonstrate what we’re talking about. Hold a pencil in front of your face with the point to the left and the eraser to the right. Close one eye and move the pencil so that the point is extremely close to your open eye. Now, cover a light switch plate across the room with the point. Next, hold the pencil at arm’s length and steady the point in the center of the plate. Imagine if that pencil point was your bow sight. Which aiming method do you think is most precise?

There are two basic ways to release the string to shoot your bow — with your fingers or with a mechanical device. Finger shooters will want to protect their digits either with a leather glove or with a shooting tab. A shooting tab is a leather device that you place between your fingers and the string.

Using a mechanical release — which is basically a trigger for your bow — will allow you to be more accurate than shooting with your fingers, because the release is more consistent. The release lets go of the string the exact same way, every time you use it, while your fingers can roll vari-

ous ways, or pinch one time but not another. There are many kinds of mechanical releases on the market. Go to an archery pro shop and try out a few to find one that feels comfortable.

If you're planning on competing in organized bullseye tournaments, be aware that what you put on your bow, and how you shoot your bow determines what class you shoot in. Generally, finger shooters do not compete against archers who use releases, and archers who use long stabilizers

and long sight bars, do not compete against those who use shorter models. And naturally, longbow and recurve shooters are not pitted against compound bow archers. Check the tournament or club rules to find out what equipment determines your shooting class.

If you're looking for a new archery challenge this year, or you want to improve your shooting skills, try "hunting" bullseyes. It might not be as widespread as 3-D shooting, but it's every bit as fun. □

Fun Games — By Connie Mertz

The Bear Facts

Copy the letter at the end of each **true** statement, and then place them below to find out the scientific name of the black bear. A black bear:

- _____ can't swim. (B)

_____ can see colors. (U)

_____ uses trails. (R)

_____ is an omnivore. (S)

_____ mates in November. (D)

_____ eats corn and honey. (U)

_____ is flat footed. (S)

_____ has poor vision. (A)

_____ truly hibernates. (P)

_____ mates every two years. (M)

_____ cub is born in a den. (E)
- _____ is mostly shy. (R)

_____ is always black. (O)

_____ is usually nocturnal (I)

_____ leaves claw marks on trees. (C)

_____ male helps raise cubs. (S)

_____ can't smell well. (T)

_____ male is called a boar. (A)

_____ is dormant in the winter. (N)

_____ finds most food by scent. (U)

_____ cub weighs two pounds at birth. (I)

_____ hind track resembles a human's footprint. (S)
- _____

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The Shooters' Corner

By Don Lewis

From the end of World War II to the early 1990s approximately 30 new cartridges were introduced, and about half of these were wildcats.

Factory Versus Wildcat



Helen Lewis

JIM PEIGHTAL firing a .22 BR Remington topped with a 6-24x Bausch & Lomb scope. This cartridge is made by necking down a Remington 6mmBR to accept a .224 bullet.

I WAS SITTING on a bench in a mall when a man with a smile on his face approached, shaking his finger at me. After introducing himself and shaking hands, he put both hands around my neck.

"I should choke you, Lewis," he playfully said. "You're responsible for me dish-ing out more than \$100 dollars to make one of those improved cartridges you keep writing about. My grandson wouldn't rest until I rechambered my .22-250 Remington to a .22-250 Ackley Improved."

"How did it work out?" I cut in.

"On our CED chronograph, we got a significant velocity increase, and our range tests showed a slight improvement in accuracy."

"It was money well spent, then," I said.

"I agree, it was money well spent, but it created a more serious problem. Now he wants to build a pure wildcat .22 BR, and it must be like yours, even right down to the color of the stock."

"That's wonderful," I replied, "I'm happy to have a fan like him. I'm sure you're anxious to get the project rolling," I said with a sneaky grin. "I certainly agree with him."

"That's easy for you to say, but it's my money that's footing the bill. He's just 16 and has no income. What would a .22 BR Wildcat cost, keeping in mind that I happen to have a heavy barrel .223 Model 700 Remington? That's what you built yours on, and he thinks it's a simple matter to have the barrel rechambered and an H-S Precision Fiberglass thumbhole stock installed."

"Well, you'll part with around \$400, but I have a feeling you're the one who got him interested in hunting and shooting. It seems to me you're who caused this problem."

"Yeah, you're right, but I wonder just

how much better a wildcat cartridge is than a factory cartridge.”

That man's doubts are the basis for this column. It's a question that's as common as frost on a fall morning. And like many shooting related questions, there seems to be no definite answer. The average varmint hunter won't get that excited over the wildcat or improved round. On the other hand, a dedicated wildcatter will go into great detail to explain the advantages of wildcatting and improving. To be downright honest, there seems to be no middle ground.

I have to admit that after nearly 40 years of testing and shooting, I can't completely agree with either side, and that puts me on thin ice with both sides. To come right down to brass tacks, a wildcat is really a conventional factory case modified to a different shape or caliber. Ninety-nine percent of all wildcat cases have a parent factory case. Wildcatting got started when someone thought he could make a more efficient case from a standard factory round. The .35 Whelen is a good example. It's nothing more than a .30-06 case necked up to accept a 35-caliber bullet. Was the .35 Whelen just a whim with some shooting buff, or did it have a genuine purpose? The latter is correct.

The .35 Whelen (designed by James Howe and named after Colonel Whelen) made its appearance in the 1920s. The only way to get a cartridge in the class of a .375 H&H Magnum was to have one built on an expensive magnum action. Advantages of the .35 Whelen were that it could handle heavy bullets, be used on short actions, such as the 98 Mauser and the Springfield, and bridge the gap between the .30-06 and the expensive .375 H&H.

The .35 Whelen had a strong following for years, but fell by the wayside after other magnums came on the scene. The powerful .375 Magnum was popular with custom rifle builders who made rifles for hunters heading to Africa. Remington standardized the .35 Whelen in 1987.

In America, wildcatting really came into its own after World War II, but new converts were not gunsmiths or handloading specialists. Admittedly, these groups were involved, but dozens of curious handloaders began to see possibilities in reforming a case to another caliber to make a better cartridge. I think it's safe to say that most early wildcatters were basically interested in speed. Using a small bullet in a fairly large case would undoubtedly increase the muzzle velocity. It's also fair to say that most of these handloaders knew little about ballistics and, at that time, the home chronograph was still just a dream.

Wildcatting's popularity began to wane around 1970, but lately it seems to be making new inroads into the shooting game. What impact did wildcatting have on hunting cartridges? Somewhere I read that from the end of World War II to the early 1990s approximately 30 new cartridges were introduced, and about half of these were wildcats. That fact should satisfy the most ardent critic of wildcatting.

Generally speaking, wildcatting has had a lot of impact on hunting cartridges. Simply necking down a .250-3000 Savage case to accept a .224 diameter bullet gave birth to the famous .22-250 Remington. While several other varmint cartridges now available may be as good as or even slightly better than the .22-250, the wildcat that took more than three decades to gain factory recognition by Remington in 1965 is without question the most popular varmint cartridge today.

There is a difference between an improved case and a true wildcat. An improved case usually blows out the shoulder angle to a sharper degree and often removes much of the case taper. A wildcat changes the neck diameter to accept a larger or smaller diameter bullet. Other changes, such as neck angle and removing case taper can also take place during the fire-forming.

One of the first attempts at improving

a case is credited to New York gunsmith Lysle D. Kilbourn. He decided to increase the velocity of the .22 Hornet. Knowing that brass is pliable and the Hornet headspaced on the case rim, Kilbourn rechambered a .22 Hornet to somewhat of a straight wall case with a sharp shoulder angle. When he tried fire-forming a factory case, he discovered the brass expanded perfectly to the dimensions of the new chamber. The result was more powder capacity, better combustion with certain powders, and higher velocities than offered by the Hornet.

While on the subject of the .22 Hornet, it's interesting to note that James Calhoon has wildcatted the .22 Hornet case even to higher velocities. The .19 Calhoon wildcat is nothing more than a .22 Hornet case necked down to 19-caliber, and fire-formed to a straight wall case with a sharp, 30-degree shoulder angle. With 27-grain Calhoon bullets, the .19 generates muzzle velocities more than 3,500 fps. I like the accuracy of the 32-grain Calhoon bullet, which exits the muzzle around 3,300 fps.

Calhoon offers a rebarrel kit that includes a heavy chambered barrel (either stainless steel or chrome molly), a 19-caliber die set, several brass cleaning brushes, and complete gunsmith instructions for threading the barrel to fit most any .22 Hornet action. I feel this wildcat, with its inherent accuracy, will eventually get factory recognition. It certainly gives new life to the moribund .22 Hornet cartridge.

I don't know how much work has been done on the 20-caliber, but Remington did offer it in their 5mm Magnum. I think it died simply because it was too much like the Winchester .22 Magnum, which is still popular. The new approach is in several centerfire versions. I'm not totally familiar with the 20, but I do know two versions are now getting more than just a casual look.

Todd A. Kindler, editor of *Small Caliber News*, writes about his "Tactical

Twenty," which I believe is built on the Lapua .220 Russian case. Another version is built on the Remington .223 case. I do not have much in the way of chamber specifications or ballistic data, but I recall seeing charts that showed muzzle velocities more than 4,300 fps using the Hornady 33-grain 20-caliber bullet. Custom rifle builder, Jim Peightal, will put one together for me as soon as I locate a barrel and die set. I intend to build mine on a Model 1500 Smith & Wesson bolt action rig.

I'm sure many hunters and shooters will never become interested in wildcat cartridges, and will stick with factory products. There's nothing wrong with that. Nowadays, few handloaders, myself included, can match the quality and dependability of the factory cartridge. Still, there are some dedicated handloaders who perhaps have dreamed of experimenting with cartridges that are not available from ammunition makers. More or less taking a different road and the crossroads.

The road into wildcat country offers challenging and intriguing possibilities in reloading and shooting. Also, there's no shortage of reliable data to keep the wildcatter within the bounds of acceptable chamber pressures, and the published ballistic data must be adhered to right down to the charge weight and type of powder shown in the manual. Wildcatting is not a guessing game; it's for those who will stick with published data and follow the instructions for the particular wildcat case being used. While it's not a whole lot different from general reloading, wildcatting brings a new dimension to the dedicated handloader. It has a more personal approach than just refilling a factory empty. Believe me, it's worth trying. □

Fun Game answer:

URSUS AMERICANUS.

The Safety Net

I'VE ALWAYS BEEN a careful guy in the woods, at least since I've grown up and developed a little common sense. We all go through a reckless period in our youth when we think we're more or less immune to injury and mishap, but eventually we have a close brush with disaster that makes us confront our own fragility, and after that we're more careful.

Because of my job as a nature writer, I spend a lot of time clambering around tropical mountains and other remote places, but the most dangerous time I spend outdoors is in Pennsylvania — during the couple of months each fall when I run a hawk banding station on a boulder field on top of the Kittatinny Ridge. It's a narrow summit, miles from the nearest road, that falls off sharply to each side, with lichen-slicked rocks that are often unstable underfoot.

After 15 years my feet know almost instinctively where to step, but even long familiarity doesn't shield me from mistakes. I've taken some tumbles in the past, once cracking a rib and badly gashing my head, but the worst incident came a couple years ago, when I slipped on the rocky trail just below the boulders. I instinctively reached out to stop my fall, and wound up snapping both bones in my lower arm, just above the wrist.

I was fortunate that day to have a buddy with me, who helped me splint the arm and climb down the mountain. More often than not, though, I work alone up there, and since that accident, I am all the more aware of how dangerous a really bad fall can be. Sure, I could hike out with a broken arm, but what about a badly fractured leg, a broken hip or a serious head injury?

The obvious answer — one mentioned relentlessly by family and friends — is to carry a cell phone. I smile and nod and thank them for their concern, but there's no chance I'll take their advice. We live in a cocoon of security — at least we fancy that we do — cushioned from the consequences of our actions by all manner of gizmos and gadgets, from GPS units that tell us where we are with cosmic precision to cell phones that have allowed hikers on remote New England mountains to call for rescue when they decided their blisters were just a bit too painful. Such crutches, I suspect, tempt us to tease fate, pushing the bounds of common sense more than we might otherwise do.

But there is a deeper reason for why I decline the "electronic lifeline." There are few opportunities these days to feel truly self-dependent — to know that we are solely and completely responsible for our own welfare. It's a feeling the 18th century longhunters who tramped the Pennsylvania frontier must have known well, but one that has become foreign to most 21st century Americans. I'm not a risk taker by nature; I do not bungee-jump off cliffs or antagonize death in other trendy ways. But each year, my sojourns on that mountaintop allow me to connect to an older and, in many ways, more satisfying time in human history. And that's a comfort no cell phone can provide.



Scott Weidensaul

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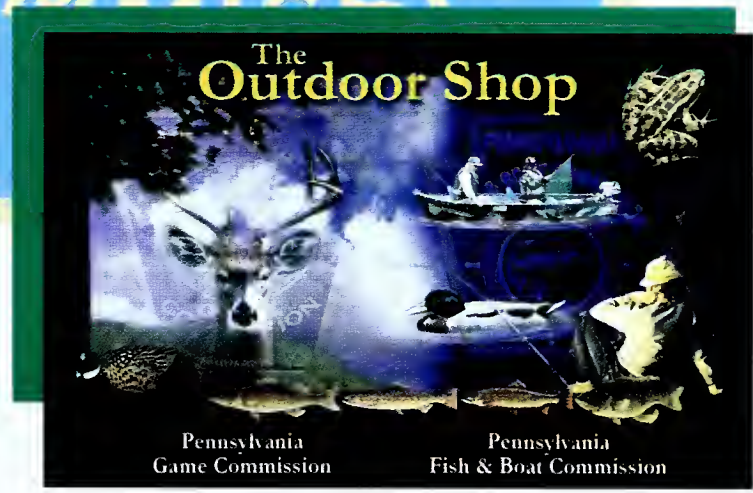
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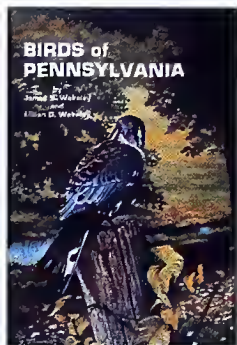
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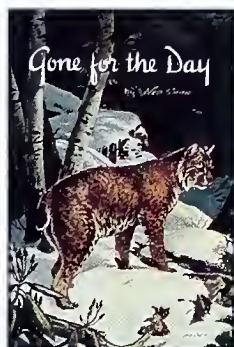
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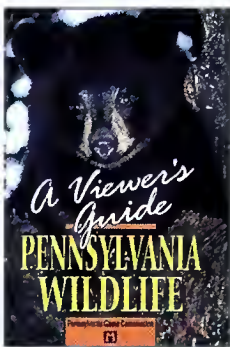
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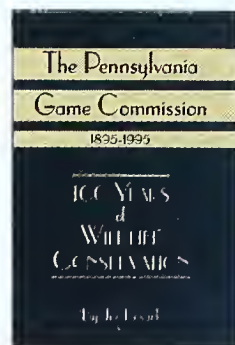
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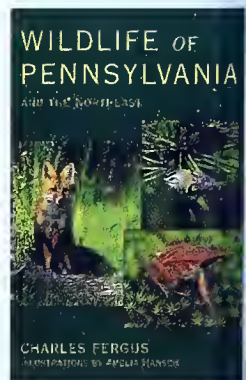
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COVER PAINTING BY BOB SOPCHICK

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PENNSYLVANIA GAME NEWS (ISSN 0031-451X) is published monthly for \$12 per year, \$34.50 for three years, or membership in Pennsylvania's Cooperative Farm-Game Project or Safety Zone Project; to Canada and all other foreign countries, \$13 U.S. currency, per year. Published by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Phone (717) 787-4250. Periodicals postage paid at Harrisburg, Pa. CHANGE OF ADDRESS: POSTMASTER: Send both old and new addresses to Pennsylvania Game News, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Allow six weeks for processing. Material accepted is subject to our requirements for editing and revising. Author payment covers all rights and title to accepted material, including manuscripts, photographs, drawings and illustrations. No information contained in this magazine may be used for advertising or commercial purposes. Opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Copyright © 2002 by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, an Equal Opportunity Employer, the programs of which are all administered consistent with the goals and objectives of Affirmative Action. All rights reserved.

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Newsstand consultant, Celtic Moon Publishing, 1-877-730-6263



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On behalf of the 26th Class

THE MEMBERS OF THE 26th Class have, today, concluded 50 weeks of extensive training at the finest conservation officer training academy in the world.

The Game Commission was established in 1895, charged as the steward of the commonwealth's wild birds and mammals, for the benefit of all Pennsylvanians. For more than 100 years, the Game Commission has protected, conserved and managed the great diversity of Pennsylvania's wildlife and their habitats. It has provided wildlife related education, services and recreational opportunities to both consumptive and non-consumptive users alike. In addition, the Game Commission has maintained and promoted Pennsylvania's strong hunting and trapping heritage.

In following this tradition, the Game Commission founded the Ross Leffler School of Conservation on July 7, 1932, in Brockway. It was the first school ever devoted entirely to the training of conservation officers and helped to establish the agency's lead role in wildlife conservation throughout the world. Of the 2,235 applicants for the first class in 1935, 35 were selected. Following that inaugural first class, only 24 more were held, with 561 officers graduated. The 26th Class is proud to join those privileged few who have come before us.

The road to being accepted as a student officer is long and filled with hope. It begins with a written civil service examination. And like with that first class, thousands compete. Those with the highest scores are then invited to a verbal examination. By the time this segment is complete, only 50 candidates remain. As expectations grow, the next step is for each candidate to be interviewed by a 7-member board. The field is then cut in half. After background investigations and physical fitness evaluations, the long waiting process begins. Written correspondence from the Game Commission is constant throughout this time, but it is not until an acceptance letter is finally received that the 9-month process to become a member in the next class ends and the true 50-week training begins.

The 26th Class began on March 18, 2001. Each student officer was greeted by the training school staff and shown where his or her assigned bunk, closet, dresser and mailbox were. The old furs, duck wings and mounts from the original training school, along with photos of all previous class members that line the hallway confirmed within all of us that both the agency and school were steeped in tradition. Inside the classroom, student officers found their assigned seats, identified only by last names inscribed upon nameplates found on the historic desktops. Along the classroom walls are signs that read "Integrity," "Concentration," "Perseverance," "Respect," "Obedience," "Self Control," "Humility," and "Indomitable Spirit" — tenants we are expected to have lived by prior to, during and after leaving the training school. The members of the class came from different backgrounds, but all with the desire to become wildlife conservation officers.

The 40 weeks of classes covered law enforcement, biology, forestry, wildlife man-

agement and land management, and much more, all designed to prepare us for the many tasks required of today's WCOs.

About five months into our training we received our deputy wildlife conservation officer commissions. For most of us, it marked the first time of having the honor of wearing a badge from the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

In September, each student officer was assigned to four different districts, for a total of ten weeks. During this time we performed the various duties of a WCO while under the watchful eye of our field training officers. The expertise, enthusiasm, experience and dedication to the agency that each student witnessed from these officers will not be forgotten. The members of the 26th Class wish to thank all the Field Training Officers and their families for opening their homes to us and spending their valuable time to help make us the best WCOs we can be.

The start of this new millennium is an exciting time to be a conservation professional. Once known as game wardens and game protectors, now as wildlife conservation officers, we face many challenges unlike those before. However, we must remember our past and recall that at the turn of the 20th century, deforestation, market hunting, and lack of game and wildlife protection laws caused elk, deer, turkey and bear to disappear or nearly disappear across the state. Other species, such as the passenger pigeon, were extinct by 1914. As the 20th century progressed, pollution and harmful chemicals caused bald eagles, ospreys, peregrine falcons, otters and many other species to drop to record low numbers.

It was only after the Game Commission was formed in 1895 and stricter laws were passed that protection and proper management of Pennsylvania's wildlife began. Through the cooperation and dedication of other federal, state and local agencies, as well as conservation organizations and the sportsmen and women, many species that were about to follow the same fate as the passenger pigeon now flourish in the commonwealth. Last year's elk season, the first in 70 years, is but a most recent example of the Game Commission's successes over the years. Yet although our accomplishments are numerous, our work is far from finished. With continued dedication, support, protection and wise management, however, wildlife will continue to flourish here.

Our goal as new WCOs is to continue to protect, manage and conserve Pennsylvania's wildlife populations and follow the strong traditions that our agency has embraced. We must also continue to inform those that we serve — all Pennsylvanians — of our vision and ask for their assistance and input to help manage and protect our precious resources.

At this point we would like to recognize a fellow student officer, Timothy L. Wenrich. During field training assignments, Tim was called to active duty by the United States Marine Corps to defend the United States of America after the events on September 11. Tim will always be a part of the 26th Class, and our thoughts and prayers go out to him and his family. We wish to extend our gratitude to all the brave men and women who fight to keep this great nation free and safe.

Most importantly, we wish to thank our families and friends, those who sacrificed and supported us throughout our lives and especially the past year. Your dedication has been as strong as ours. Today's ceremonies honor you as much as they honor us.

Finally, I wish to personally thank my fellow classmates for choosing me to speak on their behalf today. I consider it an honor and privilege to do so.

Thank you.

— Chad R. Eyler, spokesman, 26th Class of Ross Leffler School of Conservation
presented March 9, 2002, at the Hershey High School Auditorium

Medicine For Whitetails

By Justin J. Parry

I WAS BORN into a hunting family, literally raised on wild game, and all but slept with shotguns, rifles and handguns, and Hoppe's No. 9 permeated my clothing, sheets and bed covers.

When I was a baby my father, an outdoor writer for nearly a quarter century, carried me on his shoulders while hunting. I grew to enjoy the excitement of the hunt and shooting before I turned five, and from then on I had butterflies in my stomach while waiting to turn 12.

Pop and his cronies always came home with game of one kind or another. I would marvel at their kills, stroking the grouse, deer, pheasants or turkeys with a reverence akin to their being sacred. By the time I turned 12 I was nearly as proficient with a rifle and shotgun as Pop, but he'd never allow me to beat him in a shooting session. He always said, "When you get better than your mentor, Son, you'll no longer have anything to learn. Then, I'll not only be out of a job, I may lose the best huntin' partner I've ever had." He'd laugh warmly, knowing I'd never allow anything to happen to our relationship. I sincerely believe that it was our mutual love for hunting and shooting that forged our special bond.

We had countless things in common, save Pop's continuous good luck at hunting. Mine, seemingly, was a little lacking, and

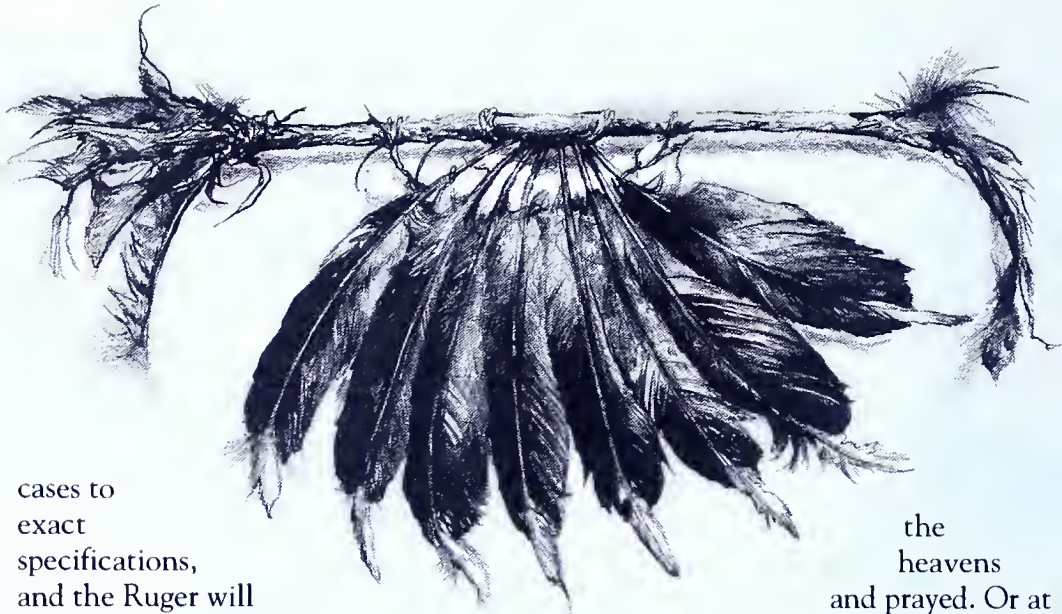
now I realize why. It seems important that I pass the "message" on to others who have little luck while afield.

When I began hunting with Pop I had a burning desire to kill any and everything that was fair game. Pop, on the other hand, was casual about everything, even though he'd get excited the night before a hunting season. He'd always say, "I'm like a little child cranking one of those jack-in-the-box toys, awaiting the moment when the little clown pops up. Anticipation to me is much greater than the kill."

Pop has a little Cherokee blood in his veins, from his mother's side, which, of course, makes me part Native American, too. But unlike Pop, I never followed the culture, the traditions and the reverent, almost religious, hunting traditions. To Pop, the hunting ritual is a deeply sacred affair, and even though I tried to follow in his footsteps from the start, I didn't quite get to the same intensity. Sure, I always had a natural respect for game. Pop made certain of that, but I believe a lot of it was inherited.

I always felt the humane killing of a deer, for example, was mandatory. Something all hunters should strive to do with utmost care. Sighting in their firearms to where a miss would be close to improbable, if not impossible. I feel, too, a hunter should take only those shots he or she knows can be made with relative certainty. I've done this all through my hunting years, and it's paid off. Each of my three deer was killed instantly. Pop, of course, loaded the 7x57





cases to exact specifications, and the Ruger will shoot quarter-size groups all day long out of a cool barrel. But, as Pop always says, "There's more to hunting than just taking game consistently." So, I determined to learn all I could about Native American ways.

We were deer hunting on Rattler Mountain in Tioga County. Pop knew of a big buck in a secluded area on the mountain, and decided he'd hunt only it. He'd never killed a whitetail with a big rack, and he often said he'd quit when he did. I didn't know whether to believe him, because Pop put deer hunting second only to attending Sunday church service.

For as long as I can remember, Pop has worn a Native American medicine bag. It contains personal items he placed in there for the Creator to bless. His newest medicine bag, made of elk hide, was given to him by Tom and Carol McGuinn, two part Native American friends who are near and dear to his heart because of their respect for wild things and wild places.

As we topped the last bench on Rattler Mountain, Pop asked me to stop. "There's somethin' I gotta do before we get to our stands," he said. He knelt, held his medicine bag to

the heavens and prayed. Or at least I thought that's what

he was doing. After several minutes, he got up, smiled, told me where to stand and left with the traditional, "Good luck, Son; one bullet, one deer, remember?" Of course I did. It was something that had been all but beaten into my brain and heart since I could say "Da, Da."

Since the day I began hunting with Pop, I always prayed: before, during and after a hunt. I prayed for a safe hunt more than anything, but also for what I considered a "successful" hunt, one where I got what I was after. Sometimes the prayers were answered, sometimes they were not, at least those for "successful hunts." After that day on Rattler, however, I wondered whether it was Pop's prayer and medicine bag combo.

When we met for lunch Pop told me about two bucks he'd seen just after first light. He chose not to shoot, because he said he was not in quite the right frame of mind. One was an average 8-point, and he thought the other was a high-racked 4-point with an unusually plump, stocky body.

Pop wasn't feeling real well. He had had several heart attacks and wasn't just a little fearful of "buying the old farm" he'd always say, or of me having to "drag his carcass off the mountain." His worry about a fatal heart attack was out of consideration for me, more so than

himself. Pop always was, and is, the most generous and considerate man I know. Because Pop wasn't feeling well, we left the mountain. Heading home, Pop asked that I pull over, and then he pointed to a little road ahead. "Take that dirt turnoff to Stony Fork Creek, Son." I did and when we got to the creek, Pop asked me to stop.

We walked several hundred yards from the creek to an area where white birch trees were so abundant that the brightness of their bark was almost blinding. There, near a small spring trickling from the hillside, was a huge pile of flagstone-type rocks. Shaped like a rectangle, with each end looking like chimneys coming off to either side of a main structure. "A Native American altar," Pop said. "Big medicine, Justin, and very sacred to those who once upon a time hunted and lived up here." There was, Pop told me, a prayer circle just in front of the massive altar, and a sort of square area built into the main structure, a place for offerings and sacrifice.

Pop then asked me to kneel and tell those buried there I was sorry for disturbing the area, but that I came to pray. To give them thanks for the great hunting heritage they had left behind for us to share and enjoy. He asked me to tell them about my personal feelings toward wildlife, and exactly what I would do in my life to conserve their populations. I did just that, but not before Pop reached into his vest and pulled out a gorgeous medicine bag made from supple deer hide. I was thrilled, for secretly I'd always wanted one to wear and cherish like Pop did, to bring me luck with hunting like he has. I reverently placed

it over my head. It hung at heart level and felt good. After my prayers, and only several moments later, the seemingly magical medicine bag wasn't even noticeable on my chest.

As we were about to leave, Pop gave me a chip off the stone that the altar was made of. He asked that I say a prayer over it, and then place it in my new medicine bag. Later, I placed other items representative of people, places and animals. All of which I said a prayer over,

asking God to bless each item, each animal or person represented.

The bag seemed to bring me luck, too.

The stars shone brightly early the next morning, a prelude to a bluebird day.

Pop told me the night before that he wouldn't be hunting this morning, because he still wasn't feeling real good.

I bumped a few deer while climbing the slope to the first large bench on Rattler. They snorted, whistled, blew and then disappeared into some cover. I waited a few minutes until things settled down, and then continued the precipitous uphill climb to where Pop had stood the day before. Pop had placed a few hemlock bows near where he sat on a large tree root next to a huge oak. This, he always said, would help break up his silhouette from the deer. He'd always done that, and his "luck" in the deer woods was at worst, uncanny. His good fortune in the deer woods was brought about by something far more special than hunting techniques, though, as I would discover that day on Rattler Mountain.



Sitting there in the quiet, overlooking a draw, I thought about things Pop had told me. "When your heart is full of respect and reverence for deer, when you're deeply sincere about forever making certain their numbers flourish, the bucks of autumn will 'give' themselves to you during your hunts. You will take, along with the physical animal, its spirit, which in your future actions will never die."

When dawn began to break I said a silent prayer, rubbed my new medicine bag, and then hunkered down and got ready for whatever would happen. Checking my watch after a while, I realized several hours had gone by. Hours that seemed like mere moments. Soon after, when I looked down in the hollow I spotted two bucks heading my way, an average 8-point and a big deer with what seemed to be a high 6-point rack. I brought my rifle to my shoulder, studied each deer for several seconds, and decided to take the 6-point.

For a second I closed my tearing eyes and said a small prayer.

The Mauser cracked. The 6-point went down, likely dead before he hit the ground. The largest buck I had ever taken lay 70 yards away. He was mine, a gift from God.

I said a prayer over the buck as Pop had taught me, and then tagged and field-dressed it, placed the heart and liver inside the chest cavity, and began the downhill drag to my old truck. I felt full, but yet with that bittersweet feeling I would hope

every hunter gets after killing a deer. Still, I whistled along the way, and smiled with a deeper gratitude than ever before.

I didn't know what magic the buckskin medicine bag had brought me, but somehow knew there was something special about it, and its carefully selected contents. Somehow I knew that my respect for deer must have had something to do with my good fortune. I had to wonder, then, if it is because some hunters lack this reverence, this touching respect for whitetails, that they hunt year after year without ever getting a buck. I have friends who have never taken deer say, "How come you and your old man are so lucky? Your dad teach you the ropes?"

Yes, my father did teach me the ropes. He taught me how and why to fully respect deer and other animals I hunt, but, more importantly, he taught me a faith in prayer, which has remained deep inside me.

I wasn't quite sure about the little magical buckskin medicine bag, at least until I arrived home. Pop met me at the door and came into the yard. "Nice buck, Justin. I bet it was one of those I had go by me yesterday. In fact, I rubbed my old medicine bag, looked that same buck in the peepers and said, 'How's about you giving yourself to my deserving son tomorrow, my friend? Obviously, Justin, he heard my request.'"

Now, I'll never forget to pray or wear my medicine bag while hunting. Without a doubt, one of them, prayer or the bag, works, or is it a blending of the two? One thing I do know is that the respect I have for whitetails is big medicine. □

PGC Continues Raising Pheasants



By Carl F. Riegner
Propagation Division Chief

Because of the substantial costs anticipated, and because it involved the potential distribution of pheasants throughout the state, a contract process was developed that would allow for the purchase of pheasants from more than one propagator.

FOR MANY YEARS it has been suggested that the Game Commission could save considerable money by purchasing pheasants from commercial vendors instead of raising birds on the agency's game farms.

Nearly two years ago, Executive Director Vern Ross asked the Bureau of Wildlife Management to see if purchasing ring-necked pheasants from private propagators could save money, while continuing to provide a top quality bird to sportsmen. Specifically, we were asked to obtain a bid or bids for approximately 50,000 birds, the equivalent of the annual production at one PGC game farm.

One of the first steps was to identify potential contractors (pheasant breeders) who might be eligible to provide birds through a bid process. To develop bid specifications we met with the Pennsylvania Game Breeders Association to discuss propagation procedures and identify minimum standards propagators would have to meet to ensure a suitable product for the Game Commission and sportsmen.

Once facility standards were developed and contractual details worked out, a mailing with basic information indicating the Game Commission's interest in purchasing pheasants from private propagators was sent out to more than 485 licensed propagators. Fewer than 50 responded, but it's interesting to note that one was from Montana. When the "Invitation to Qualify" was provided to this group with detailed specifications about the birds, only 11 replied.

So what kind of bird did we want to purchase? To provide a well-feathered adult pheasant, it was determined that we would need 23-week-old birds. Data was collected from pheasants reared at our game farms to determine physical characteristics, such as weight and tail measurements, to ensure a comparable bird. Also, of great concern were health requirements of pheasants purchased for release. Our agency is obligated to safeguard the accidental introduction of disease into other wild bird populations, so a health certificate would be required for any birds obtained from commercial propagators prior to their release.

The time frame to purchase birds is restricted by our seasons and bag limits and other regulations. Hen pheasants are protected in about two-thirds of Pennsylvania, so we need to have available for the fall stocking more males than females. The sex ratio of hatched chicks is about 1:1

male to female; therefore, more hens are produced than we can allocate for stocking. Additionally, the majority of qualified propagator facilities were located in the male only hunting area, so for logistical reasons, we opted to purchase only male pheasants.

Ultimately, seven vendors met our standards and criteria, and were eligible to bid on the pheasant contract.

When they came in, bid prices ranged from \$8.65 to \$15 a bird. To purchase the 49,700 pheasants needed to replace the production of one game farm would require five bidders. From the five lowest bidders, the cost was \$488,280, or \$9.82 per bird. Delivery charges from 40 to 75 cents per mile would be in addition to the price per bird.

The cost of producing 48,000 pheasants at the Game Commission's Northcentral Game Farm, the facility targeted for closure if the commercial venture went forward, was \$577,000 in fiscal year 2000-01. This facility does not maintain a breeding population of pheasants, so closing this farm would minimize the impact on the remaining three farms. The plant could be dismantled and the acreage added to the adjacent game lands. Most importantly, closing this farm would have had the least impact on personnel. Two managers would have been retained in the propagation program and assumed new duties, while the remainder of the game farm staff would be transferred from pheasant production to Food and Cover Corps duties, retaining those salaries and benefits in the agency's existing personnel costs. In addition, new costs would have been incurred, such as a survey to determine hunter satisfaction with commercially produced and purchased pheasants.

During the past decade, the cost of producing pheasants has steadily increased, but through tight fiscal management, the Propagation Division has kept our costs stable. The Legislative Budget and Finance Committee, which conducts annual audits

of commission programs, determined in fiscal year 1992-93, the cost to produce a pheasant was \$11.31. Last year, the cost was \$11.55. Keeping the costs down has required sacrifice. Personnel costs, which we have little control over, account for more than 70 percent of expenses. Positions have been eliminated through attrition, and many maintenance and production materials have been salvaged from other facilities to reduce expenses.

"We ask our employees to do more with less, and I have pushed our propagators to strive for a top quality product that can survive and offer a near wild hunting experience, but we must continue to evaluate stocking strategies and marketing to serve the best interests of sportsmen. I am pleased to finally have factual data upon which to defend the Game Commission's Propagation Program," Vern Ross said. "In the final analysis, it's now clear that purchasing pheasants from the private sector would not bring about major cost reductions and, in fact, would result in a net increase in the agency's Propagation Division budget. With factual data now in hand, the Game Commission will not close the Northcentral Game Farm anytime in the near future, and we will not be purchasing commercially produced pheasants. Nevertheless, we will continue to review any and all agency functions to ensure we fulfill our responsibilities to the wildlife, the hunters and trappers, and the general public in a more cost efficient manner."

We know that pheasant hunting is important to many hunters, and the Game Commission will continue to provide the best hunting opportunities possible. This study of using commercial propagators to replace our pheasant farms illustrates just how fiscally responsible we are in meeting these demands. □



The End of a Drought

By Richard Tate

IN 1996 I called in three spring gobblers while hunting on public land: one for my dad, one for my son Bob, and one for me. I thought I had spring gobbler hunting pretty well figured out, and that I could repeat this success regularly. It was a good thing I never actually made that claim to anyone else, because for the next three springs I couldn't buy a turkey.

During the 1997 and '98 seasons, I was unable to draw a bird close enough to being even a candidate for the roaster. At every turn, the keen-eyed gobblers defeated me, frustrating me day after day.

I wore my shotgun shells out just putting them in and taking them out of the gun.

By the time the '99 season rolled around, you'd think I would have been tired of enduring springs without turkeys. But within 45 minutes of the opening hour, I had three plump jakes standing within 25 yards of my set up, looking for the "hen" they had heard calling to them. But I did not follow the adage about shooting the first legal turkey that comes into range on public land, though. During our preseason

scouting sessions, Dad and I had located many longbeards, and I felt confident I'd be able to call one in. It didn't happen, of course. The three jakes were the only birds I called into shooting range all spring, meaning once again, another spring without a gobbler.

I hoped the beginning of the new millennium would bring a change. As usual, I scouted religiously during the preseason to give myself plenty of options. By daybreak on the season opener, I was situated in a patch of woods where Dad and I had heard several gobblers. We both thought the area was far enough off the beaten path that I would have no interference from other hunters when I tried to call in a gobbler.

At 5:30 a gobbler hollered from his roost and kept it up for 15 minutes. Following the advice of noted experts, I replied only once or twice to the tom on the roost. It didn't work. When he flew down — across a deep hollow — he gobbled only one more time and then shut up. I looped above the hollow to call to him, but after a couple hours of maneuvering, I realized he wasn't coming in. I hung around, hoping another turkey would sound off, but by 11 o'clock I admitted defeat, noting in my journal that my "most frustrating/challenging gobbler season was off to its usual start."

The next morning I went out at dawn to listen, and the gobbler was right back where he had begun on

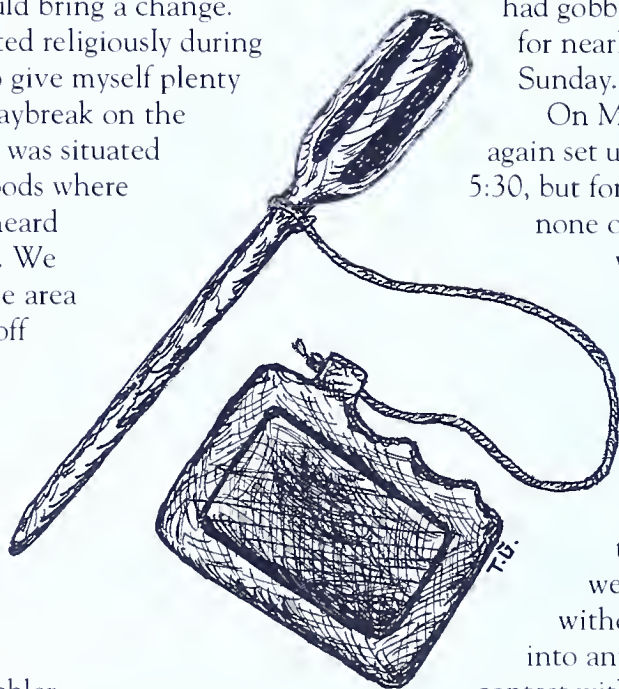
Saturday — and a couple other birds were gobbling as well. I was excited. I set myself up for a Monday morning hunt by taking one of my two remaining personal leave days. (I had taken my other one during the previous fall season.) I decided to hunt a gobbler that had gobbled farther up the ridge from the one I had hunted on Saturday, because he had gobbled aggressively for nearly an hour on Sunday.

On Monday, I was again set up well before 5:30, but for some reason none of the gobblers were making any noise. I finally heard a faint gobble at 8:15, but even after hustling to try to pinpoint the turkey, I went home without even getting into any sort of calling contest with it. It was

certainly shaping up to be a typical no-bird spring for me again.

Dad was having no better luck, and Bob, who had secured permission to hunt on a section of private land, had not yet killed a turkey. Rumor had it that several of the local experts had collected nice gobblers early on, so I figured that would open up a few additional spots for me to hunt.

Failing to roost a bird on Friday of the opening week, I decided to go back to the knob where the gobbler had eluded me on the previous Saturday. This time, however, I opted to set up a little higher on the knob, hoping that if the gobbler was still there he'd be interested enough in my calling to fly down on my side of the hollow. I was there early, but when nothing happened by 6:30, I figured I



wasn't going to hear anything. I was just getting my gear stashed in my daypack to make a move when a gobbler ripped loose from behind a thicket out in front of me. Immediately, another gobbler hollered off to my left. I hastily plopped back down, figuring the intermittent calling I'd been doing for the previous hour had drawn these birds close. I shakily fished a chatterbox and my favorite mouth call from my jacket. I had put my big box and slate callers in the daypack, and didn't have the time to get them back out. I clucked on the diaphragm and both gobblers hollered back. Well, I thought, I'm finally going to get a crack at a gobbler.

But, as usual, it didn't happen. Immediately after the toms had gobbled back to me, a hen began to call from directly below the gobblers. Despite my most pleading, frantic yelps and clucks, both gobblers went straight to the hen.

A little later, however, a hen sailed into a clearing in front of me, 15 or 20 yards away. Although she wasn't a legal bird, I enjoyed watching her peck around for a half hour before she worked back up the hill she had sailed down.

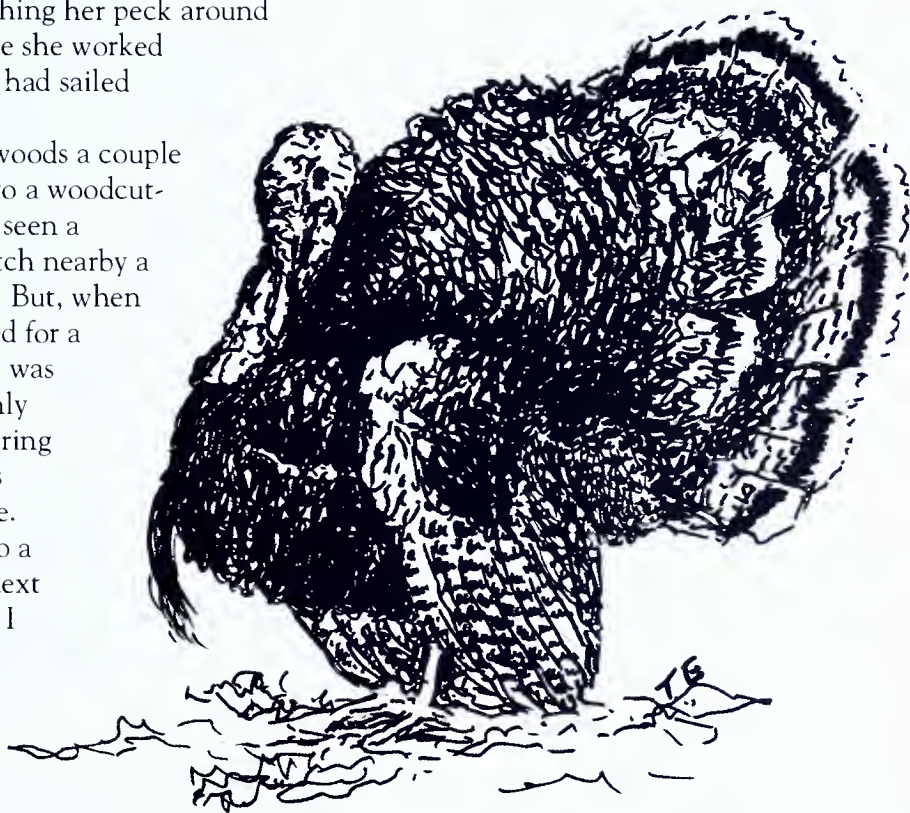
When I left the woods a couple hours later, I ran into a woodcutter who said he had seen a gobbler in a fern patch nearby a couple hours before. But, when I got there and called for a little while, the bird was long gone. It certainly appeared that my spring gobbler drought was destined to continue.

A scouting trip to a different ridge the next day was uneventful; I didn't even hear a crow.

The following Thursday, I took my last

personal leave day and went to a farm I was pretty unfamiliar with. Before long I got into a calling contest with what sounded like a couple of toms. I looped around them and went through my entire bag of calling tricks, including a mock fight, and finally gave them the silent treatment, but they refused to budge. After two hours, they, too, shut up, so I called it quits and went home to take a much needed nap.

My real break came by dumb luck that evening. I was trout fishing on a small local creek when at dusk I heard a couple gobblers from a small patch of woods that jutted out from the base of a knob. I rarely hunted there because one of the local gobbler getters hunts there regularly, and I try not to interfere with other hunters. But, knowing this fellow had already gotten a bird, I figured the woodlot would be a good place for Saturday, May 13.



At 5:30, what sounded like two birds began to gobble from their roosts, so I set up and made a few tentative calls from the edge of the woods, alongside an old pasture. When the birds flew down, however, they began to climb the knob behind the patch of woods. I had no choice but to follow them. The bank I crawled up would have seemed steep to a 20-year-old, but to this 50-year-old hunter, it was like climbing Mt. Everest. Huffing and puffing, I got to the top of the knob and was delighted to find an open flat woods. Sweating, and with fogged glasses that I had to wipe off, I set up and called, and one of the turkeys answered immediately. This went on for some time, till finally the bird started to walk away from me. I eased toward the back side of the flat on the knob, as the gobbler seemed to be hanging on the front side, and a hundred yards later I set up and called again.

Gobble-obble-obble. But, once more, after 10 or 15 minutes of parrying, he moved away from me. This happened several more times, and each time I inched ahead along the backside of the knob as the turkey remained on the front.

I finally decided to try a mock fight, as I had tried unsuccessfully earlier in the season. Not only did this gobbler holler, but a second one

at my level on the knob joined in. Not long afterwards, I saw him slinking through a small laurel tangle. The gobbler on the front of the knob continued to gobble. That tom was finally coming my way, but before he appeared, the other gobbler showed up within shooting range. I could see a beard dangling from his chest, and when he stepped behind a big tree, I swiveled the gun to the other side and clicked off the safety. When he stepped out and craned his neck I put my bead on his head and yanked the trigger. At the boom of the 12-gauge the gobbler went right down. I quickly scrambled to him to prevent an escape, but he wasn't going anywhere.

After several years, I had finally collected a spring turkey. The gobbler sported an 8½-inch beard and weighed more than 16 pounds. With inch-long spurs, I figured he was two years old. It was certainly a satisfying feeling to be carrying a gobbler from the spring woods after having endured so many turkeyless spring outings.

There is a postscript to this story, too. As I was dressing the gobbler, after showing him to my dad, Bob arrived with a gobbler of his own. It was a fat 18-pounder with a 9-inch beard and sharp spurs more than an inch long. At least a 3-year-old tom, we figured. Bob was happy with his continued hunting success and seemed as delighted as I was that I, too, had finally ended my spring gobbler hunting drought. □

"The sedge is wither'd from the lake, and no birds sing."
— John Keats

More Than Game

By Larissa Rose

PGC Information Writer

SOME PARTS OF the country are forests. Others are wetlands. Still others are mountains. Here in Pennsylvania, we have all of these habitats, and then some. Throughout the state, wetlands run into forests that run into grasslands that run into mountains. All of these habitats are diverse, yet exist next to each other. And there are countless species that inhabit these areas. Something needed to be done to ensure that these exceptional habitats remained intact to support wildlife for years to come.

In the 1980s, Birdlife International started the Important Bird Area (IBA) program in Europe to identify areas most important for maintaining bird populations, and focus conservation efforts on protecting those areas; sites in 156 countries are now being identified. In 1995, the program was initiated in the U.S. by Audubon, and in 1996, Pennsylvania became the first of 43 states to participate. Since then, more than 1,300 sites have been identified throughout the country.

To become an IBA in Pennsylvania, an area must meet one of five criteria: include major concentration areas for breeding, wintering or migrating birds; have state or federal endangered or threatened species; have Pennsylvania species of special concern; have rare, threatened or unique habitats; or have long-term research or monitoring going on.

In Pennsylvania, 77 sites encompassing more than a million acres of public and private lands in 60 counties have been

identified as IBAs, 25 of which include all or parts of 35 game land tracts. With its mission being "To manage all wild birds, mammals and their habitats for current and future generations," it's no wonder the Game Commission's lands should comprise such a significant portion of the state's IBAs.

While the majority of game lands are paid for through hunting license fees, the areas are not managed solely for game species, as these nearly two dozen IBAs show. The native warm season grasses that the food and cover crews have been planting on game lands provide cover and nesting habitat for pheasants, but also for other grassland species — such as bobolinks, eastern meadowlarks and savannah sparrows — that have been steadily declining over the past 30 years.

While the game lands included in the IBA program were selected for various reasons, they can be divided into four main habitat groups: large forest, wetland, unique or rare and raptor migration route. Two of the 25 IBAs on game lands are large forest habitats. St. Anthony's Wilderness, SGL 211 and 210, is a large forested area, and various species of warblers — such as golden-winged, prairie and blue-winged — find the openings in the forest ideal for nesting.

The Quehanna Wild Area, 50,000 acres of extensive forest in Cameron,

Clearfield and Elk counties, is mainly managed by DCNR's Bureau of Forestry, but SGL 34 lies within the area, and is managed by the PGC. Golden and bald eagles winter in the area, and the large forest allows for an exceptional diversity of woodland birds. Breeding species using different forest types thrive in the area, including black-and-white, black-throated green, blue-winged, pine and chestnut-sided warblers; as well as whip-poor-wills, rose-breasted grosbeaks and indigo buntings.

A large number of the IBAs on game lands are wetland habitats. Shohola Waterfowl Management Area in Pike County (SGL 180) has been home to breeding bald eagles for many years, while shorebirds, waterfowl and warblers make their homes around the lake. Migrating shorebirds are attracted to the marshy areas. Large numbers of wood ducks and American black ducks migrate through and breed in the area.

The Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area, SGL 46, is more than 6,000 acres, 1,500 of which are set aside for the propagation of waterfowl. The lakes, ponds and agricultural

fields attract waterfowl, a variety of raptors, many grassland birds and many species of ducks, including hundreds of common mergansers during spring migration. The area is also an important staging area for thousands of tundra swans and up to 150,000 snow geese from January until April, before they head to their nesting grounds in northern Canada.

The Blue Marsh Lake area in Berks County adjoins 7,000 acres of SGL 280, and is located on a flyway used by many migratory waterfowl, including thousands of common mergansers, Canada geese and snow geese; as well as songbirds such as blue-winged, worm-eating and black-and-white warblers. The endangered bald eagle and threatened osprey migrate through the area in the fall, while the endangered short-eared owl winters there.

The Ricketts Glen State Park IBA includes SGL 57, which contains Creveling Lake area in Wyoming County. The largely unfragmented forested area has attracted more than 75 breeding species, including pileated woodpecker and barred owl; as well as magnolia, black-throated blue and green warblers. Also part of the Ricketts Glen complex is the diverse area around Splashdam Pond in Sullivan County on SGL 13. The Creveling Lake and Splashdam Pond areas are ideal for breeding waterfowl, including green-winged teal and hooded merganser. Bald eagles and osprey migrate through the area in the spring and fall, and the state endangered American bittern breeds in the area.

Marsh Creek Wetlands, also known as "The Muck," or SGL 313, is located in Tioga County, and the marshes there are important for thousands of migrating and nesting birds. Bald eagles and osprey have been successfully reestablished in the area, and the endangered American and least bitterns nest in the area.

SGL 282, also known as Akeley Swamp in Warren County at the New York border, is a small but productive area for breeding wetland species. Songbirds such as

Rob Criswell



THE OSPREY, once extirpated from the state, has rebounded and is now listed as threatened in Pennsylvania. The fish-eating bird inhabits several of the wetland IBAs.

warblers nest in the brushy areas, and nearly 150 species of birds have been recorded in Akeley Swamp. Approximately four pairs of least bittern breed there, and American bittern are thought to breed there, too.

SGL 95, known as "The Glades," in Butler County, contains not only wetlands, but also forests, open fields and thickets. The diversity of habitat allows for at least 90 species to nest in the area, including bald eagles and, throughout the year, the thickets and forests have been used by more than 200 species of songbirds during their migrations and in the winter. A pair of bald eagles regularly nest near the lake and a small number of sandhill cranes, rare in the state, migrate through the area during the spring and fall.

SGL 284, also known as Schollard's Run Wetlands, or, locally, Pennsy Swamp in Mercer County and Black Swamp in Lawrence County, is a dense cattail marsh, and SGL 151 in Lawrence County, which includes Celery Swamp, is only a few miles away from SGL 284. The complex supports a wide variety of breeding waterfowl and shorebirds, including pied-billed grebe, common moorhen, Virginia rail, sora and marsh wren. The endangered king rail, American bittern and least bittern are possible breeders, and sandhill cranes and king rail stopover in the area during migration.

Crawford County has a major wetland complex, and three of the game land IBAs are located there. The Conneaut Marsh, also known as Geneva Marsh, includes all of SGL 213, and has various wetland habitats, as well as forests and brush lands. Many threatened and endangered species are found in the area, including bald eagle, black and common tern, American and least bittern and great egret. Some of the largest breeding populations of wetland birds in the state occur there. Migratory waterfowl and shorebirds also frequent the area, including thousands of ring-necked, wood, and black ducks, as well as American wigeon and hooded merganser.

Rob Criswell



ENDANGERED IN Pennsylvania, the great egret can be found near water about anywhere in the state, although they nest only at one site here.

The Pymatuning Reservoir and Wildlife Management Area, as well as the area of SGL 214 known as Hartstown Swamp, supports one of the largest concentrations of nesting bald eagles in the state. It is also Pennsylvania's only recent nesting location for endangered black terns. Thousands of migratory waterfowl can be found in the wildlife refuge during the fall and winter, including the common goldeneye, Canada goose, hooded merganser and tundra swan. The state's largest population of prothonotary warblers can be found in the swampy wetlands, and American and least bitterns breed in the area.

The Cussewago Bottom, a seasonally flooded bottomland, extends north into Erie County, and more than 190 species have been observed there during migration, and bald eagles have been known to breed there. Yellowthroated and warbling vireos, as well as cerulean, Kentucky and hooded warblers are common, as are other mature bottomland forest species.

The Roderick Wildlife Preserve, SGL 314, is located on the westernmost portion of the Lake Erie shoreline in Pennsylvania. The area

is made up of wetlands and forests, a combination that makes the area one of the most important sites in the state for American woodcock. Migrating species, including hawks in the spring, pass through the area, and wetlands are being restored for waterfowl, wading birds and other wetland species.

A rarity in Bucks County, Quakertown Swamp (SGL 139) is a large natural wetland. Many wetland species nest in the area, including great blue herons, making it one of the few heron rookeries in southeastern Pennsylvania. Endangered species such as American and least bittern, as well as great egret, migrate through the area in the spring, and least bittern, Virginia rail, sora, marsh wren and black-crowned night heron have all nested in the area.

Farther north, in Wyoming County, is SGL 57, known as Dutch Mountain Wetlands, a complex of boreal conifer swamps and scrub-shrub wetlands. Many species, such as the barred owl and scarlet tanager, inhabit the large forest interiors, but it is also home to the state's largest population of threatened yellow-bellied flycatchers, and is the only known breeding

site of blackpoll warblers in the state.

Several areas in Pennsylvania serve as major migration routes for raptors. The Kittatinny Ridge system extends from Franklin County, northeast to Monroe County, and the Appalachian Trail follows the ridge. Portions of game lands 80, 106, 110, 168, 170 and 217 are included in the system, but two sites are particularly notable. Waggoner's Gap, just west of SGL 170, lies on Blue Mountain, which divides Cumberland and Perry counties. It is a popular hawk watching site during the spring and fall migrations. At least 20,000 raptors pass through the area each season, and golden and bald eagles are common migrants. Hawk Mountain, which lies in Schuylkill, Berks and Lehigh counties and adjoins SGL 106, is the premier raptor migration spot along the corridor in the northeastern U.S. Sixteen species of raptors, including sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawks, migrate through the area each year, as well as more than 140 other species of birds, including the endangered bald eagle and peregrine falcon.

Bald Eagle Ridge, occupying nearly 22,000 acres in Centre, Blair and Huntingdon counties, includes SGL 278. The ridge runs from Altoona to Williamsport, and is an important flyway for raptors. Golden eagle counts are some of the highest recorded in eastern North America, and the unfragmented forests along the ridge provide breeding habitat for neotropical species such as worm-eating warbler, wood thrush and scarlet tanager; and American woodcock and wild turkeys benefit from its spring seeps.

A considerably smaller (two acres), yet equally important site is Second Mountain Corridor in Lebanon County, which includes SGL 211. This hawk watching spot sees thousands of birds a season, since many from the Kittatinny Ridge may split flight lines and move into this area. Endangered bald eagles, peregrine falcons and short-eared owls, as well as threatened ospreys migrate through the area in the fall, and



ONE OF THE FEW heron rookeries in the southeastern part of the state is in Quakertown Swamp in Bucks County, SGL 139, where great blue herons nest.

the first gyrfalcon, Swainson's and ferruginous hawks ever recorded in Lebanon County were spotted there.

In the southwest corner of the state lies a rare and threatened habitat. Enlow Fork (SGL 302), in Washington and Greene counties, is a riverbottom forest containing riparian species, and is dedicated to protecting rare wildflowers. Species that require mature riparian forest, such as cerulean, yellow-throated and Kentucky warblers, breed in the area. In Centre County is SGL 176, known as The Barrens, one of the most unusual habitat types in Pennsylvania, and has been studied by the Game Commission for years. Whip-poor-will, ruffed grouse and American woodcock breed there, while large numbers of neotropical migrants, including 33 species of warblers, such as blue-winged, golden-winged, Tennessee, orange-crowned, cerulean and American redstart, pass through the area in the spring and fall. Long-term research on the site by the PGC on ruffed grouse and wild turkeys has been ongoing for decades.

Long Pond Preserve in Monroe County is comprised of SGL 38 and private lands. The Nature Conservancy has designated it as one of the state's "Last Great Places," and is raising money to protect it. The presence of both dry- and wet-adapted plants has created an unusual ecosystem found nowhere else in the world. Wading and songbirds, such as great blue heron, wood duck, cedar waxwing, scarlet tanager, prairie warbler and eastern towhee, as well as several conifer species including red-breasted nuthatch, magnolia warbler and purple finch, inhabit the diverse region encompassing 15,000 acres. The endangered American bittern and threatened osprey breed in the area, as well as the northern harrier.

The IBA program depends on support from public and private organizations, and a large amount of funding comes from the state and federal government. In 1999, Governor Ridge signed the Growing

State game lands continue to prove to be extremely important to the IBA program. National Audubon Society and Birdlife International recently announced a new initiative to identify IBAs of global significance, and six locations in Pennsylvania are being considered. Two of the sites are Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area (SGL 46), and the Kittatinny Ridge system, which contains parts of six game lands.

Greener Program into law, which will invest nearly \$650 million over five years through grants to preserve farmland and protect open space and restore watersheds. Audubon Pennsylvania was awarded two grants to enhance habitat for wildlife on or near game land IBAs in Berks and Lawrence counties.

In 2002, the federal Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program (WCRP) awarded \$1.5 million to Pennsylvania for conservation projects, and the IBA project received \$126,000. The monies will be used to create an IBA database, develop communication tools, and initiate monitoring programs and conservation plans.

Information about the IBA program is available on the Audubon Pennsylvania web page at www.pa.audubon.org, or by writing Audubon Pennsylvania at 100 Wildwood Way, Harrisburg, PA, 17110, or by calling at 717-213-6880.

The IBA process is continually evolving. Three sites not detailed here have been selected: Hay Creek watershed in Berks and Chester counties includes SGL 43. In Blair and Huntingdon counties lies SGL 166, which is part of the Canoe Creek watershed; as well as SGL 118, which lies along the Frankstown Branch of the Juniata River from Water Street to Williamsburg. □



Last Chance

By Jim Allera

ON SEPTEMBER 29, 2001, when picking up my mail, I found a large white envelope marked "PA Game Commission." I quickly opened it and was surprised to find that I was one of only 520 applicants that received a permit to hunt or trap a bobcat during the 2001-02 season — the second season since the 1970s.

A Game Commission biologist told me that 290 permits were issued for 2001-02, good in Furbearer Management Zones 2 and 3, which include all or parts of 20 counties in the northcentral and northeastern parts of the state. The harvest during the first season, 2000-01, was 58.

Being a trapper since I was a young boy growing up in North Apollo, I had

taken quite a variety of furbearers, and I was thrilled to have a chance at a bobcat. I wasn't sure where to go to trap one of these critters, though. After giving it some thought, I remembered one of my church friends, Bill Spence, who had mentioned to me that they occasionally see bobcats around their hunting camp in Potter County. I immediately called Bill and was assured that I would be more than welcome to come up and try my hand at catching the elusive bobcat.

After arriving at Last Chance Camp in Austin, I was amazed at how wild and remote the country was. Looking over the vast area, I couldn't begin to imagine where to begin setting traps. I obviously had a lot of walking and hard work ahead of me, and I would need lots of luck.

After parking my truck next to camp, I never moved it again in the four and a half days I was there. The first two days I did plenty of walking and scouting to locate the most likely places to set my 20 or so #2 foothold traps. The first day I made some dirthole sets, using fish I had caught during the summer and frozen for bait. The first two days I caught two small raccoons and an opossum. On the third day I set out a few more traps in some new areas I had discovered. By the end of the week I had 21 sets, mostly dirthole. My last day, Sunday, was my last chance, as I would need to pull my traps. Bill Spence and his 5-year-old son accompanied me to help carry in the traps and pegs.

I pulled four traps in one area, and then went to check a dirthole set in another area, but discovered that the Victor 1½ and grapple were gone. On a bank about 15 yards from my set I spotted the back of an animal, which I thought was another raccoon. As soon as I topped the rise, however, I was greeted by a snarling bobcat, which had the grapple hung up in a small sapling. After dispatching the cat, I just stood there in amazement at what an un-

believable feat I had accomplished. In my many years of running a trapline, taking deer with the bow, flintlock and rifle, taking four subspecies of wild turkeys, 10 times, taking a bear, antelope and mule deer, I have never felt excitement as I did after trapping the bobcat.

After taking a bobcat the furtaker is required to call the Game Commission within 48 hours. A biologist told me exactly what to do. I took my cat to a taxidermist, and after he skinned it, a biologist picked up the carcass. He told me they would determine the age, examine the reproductive tract, stomach, etc, and that I would get a report by September, 2002. He also told me that on an average it takes a person 20 days to harvest a cat in Pennsylvania. (Actually, when all the information was in, it turned out that it takes an average of 12 days to take a bobcat.)

Trapping my "Last Chance" bobcat was one of my greatest outdoor experiences of my life. It was tough, hard work, but it all paid off. □

Days of Yore



This photo was taken around 1949. JOHN H. GRANT SR. (holding the rifle) with his grandson, WILLIAM H. MAUGER, and friends.

Courtroom Melee

By Mario L. Piccirilli

Butler County WCO

IT WAS 10:30 a.m. on January 30, 2001, and I was at the magistrate's office in Saxonburg. As the judge bolted through the courtroom back door, her black robe flying, the words of PGC training supervisor Rich Palmer vividly echoed in my mind, "You just can't believe how fast things can go south."

This case began on the second day of the 2000 buck season. Deputy Fran Bodema and I were patrolling when Deputy Harold Kennedy radioed to say he had discovered an improperly tagged buck on top of a vehicle in Jefferson Township. The hunting license, with the tag still attached, was in the plastic holder pinned through the buck's ear. The hunter appeared to have used a bullet to fill out the tag, and while the information was legible, I thought Deputy Bodema and I should swing by and make sure nobody was back out trying to take a second deer.

When we got there we noticed two hunters about 300 yards away, at the far end of the cornfield, and decided to check them. As I was skirting the edge of a wheat field a 6-point buck popped out of the corn, 20 yards away, and ran up into a field. As the buck was running up the hill away from me I heard a shot. It was then that I noticed a hunter 75 yards away, and I was in his direct line of fire.

Two more shots rang

out as I hurried out of the line of fire, towards the woodlot. The hunter turned out to be a 12-year-old boy. I asked him who he was hunting with and he said his grandfather and uncle. His grandfather was 300 hundred yards away, and his uncle was 150 yards in the other direction. While speaking to the youngster I could see a house less than 100 yards from where he had fired, well within a Safety Zone. I had the boy take two steps to his left and his mouth dropped open when he saw the house. We checked the area to see if he had hit the deer and then waited for his uncle to arrive. When his uncle came over I asked them to meet me down on the road. I left and checked the house to make certain it had not been hit.

Back at the vehicles we discovered that the boy's grandfather was the hunter with the improperly tagged deer. We gave him a pen to more clearly fill out his tag and then had him properly attach it to the buck. I then issued him a citation for not supervising his grandson, and the boy's uncle was issued a citation for hunting in an unharvested cornfield without permis-



sion. The boy's grandfather started arguing, saying that he had permission to hunt in the fields, but when we checked, we found he did not. Even though the man did not know his grandson had shot at a deer in a Safety Zone, he argued that he knew right where he was. I told them they could request a hearing on the citations and thanked them for their cooperation.

The grandfather requested a hearing, and it was scheduled for January 30, 2001 at 10:30 a.m. in Saxonburg's District Justice courtroom. His son had pled guilty to hunting in an unharvested cornfield. (Prior to the hearing the defendants attempted to get permission from landowners where they had been cited, but this after the fact attempt was to no avail.)

When the hearing began I was trying to testify when both defendants continually interrupted me. Throughout the hearing they were ordered by the judge on several occasions to sit down, keep quiet and refrain from any more outbursts. At one point, the grandfather started screaming and waving his arms at me. State Police trooper Hank Moretti, who was sitting in the back of the courtroom, advised him to settle down or he would be arrested for disorderly conduct.

At the conclusion of the hearing the magistrate found the defendant guilty. The younger man jumped up and yelled, "You #@*%, I'll kill you if I catch you in the woods." As I turned my head I saw him coming straight for me, but Trooper Moretti intercepted him. The defendant and Trooper Moretti landed on the floor as the judge ran to call the State Police barracks for help. I stumbled over knocked down chairs to help Moretti just about the time the grandfather joined the melee. I pulled out my pepper spray and ordered the older man to stop. He promptly complied and assumed a position against the wall. After Trooper Moretti and I subdued and arrested the other defendant, I looked up and saw the attorney for the next hearing standing in the far corner of the courtroom.



I apologized to him for what had occurred. He nervously replied, "I'm used to seeing this sort of thing, and I understand."

Another state trooper arrived, and as I walked out of the courtroom to call my region office, I noticed the waiting area was empty. I peered behind the reception window of the magistrate's office and saw several secretaries and a group of other people awaiting hearings huddled together behind locked doors with the judge.

The younger of the two violators was cited for disorderly conduct by Trooper Moretti, but he didn't show up in court and subsequently was picked up on an arrest warrant and ended up paying \$460 in fines — his Game Law violation was only \$50.

Later, when I told my wife what had happened, she asked me what the judge did. When I told her that she bolted out of the courtroom, my wife replied, "Smart girl, I would have done the same." My wife wanted to know what the judge had said afterwards, so I told her she said, "Mario, the next time, please try not to mark up my walls, they were just painted."

"Yes, your Honor," I replied. □

Three's a Crowd

By Phil Burkhouse

IT WAS TUESDAY evening of the first week of spring gobbler season. I, having been hunting in Missouri, missed Pennsylvania's Saturday opener, but made it home to hunt Monday and Tuesday with Dad. Monday morning had been silent, and although we heard a gobbler announce his presence at dawn on Tuesday, he was a long way off. We hunted in his direction, but never heard from him again.

Tuesday evening I asked my wife Mary to go for a hike with me. She eyed me suspiciously, knowing I was interested only in her ears. Hiking to a high point, we listened into the head of a ravine that ran into a large hollow. Near the top of the ravine stood a thick stand of mature hemlock and white pine that had been harboring roosting turkeys for many decades.

We waited on the knob for a half an hour, until the last flickers of light drained from the sky. Just when it seemed like it was going to be another silent evening of scouting, a thunderous gobble suddenly erupted from the

hemlocks about 200 yards away. One gobble was apparently all he was good for, but it was enough to put a broad grin across my face — which I quickly turned into a frown, in case the old tom might hear the skin on my facing moving. I motioned to Mary that it was time to head out, and we moved silently down the ridge away from the gobbler.

I couldn't have been more confident. I was certain that gobbler had wrapped his scaly little toes around a limb for the last time. In the morning either Dad or I would tote this fellow out of the woods, much to the delight of every subordinate gobbler in the territory.

I've discovered it's always best to savor that feeling of confidence the night before the hunt because that is often as good as it gets. Many things can go awry, and this hunt was destined to be no exception.

Upon arriving home I phoned Dad and told him the plan. The next morning I picked him up in the wee hours, and we parked the truck about a 40-minute walk from the roost site. The balmy morning foretold of a hot and humid day. The sky was clear and congested with star shine; it

was a terrific morning to be alive. I couldn't stifle the desire to let a "who cooks for you" float out across the old grown over farm fields and orchards that had provided us with some nice archery bucks over the years. I grinned as a barred owl answered immediately. It was a great morning that had the promise of getting even better.

Dad and I hiked out the ridge and arrived at our des-



tination in short order. Having hunted this area a few times before, it didn't take long for us to figure out what we wanted to do. I pointed in the gobbler's direction and whispered, "about 200 yards." Dad slowly worked his way 30 yards in front of me and sat against a large white oak. I snuggled in against a red oak and awaited the first note signaling the beginning of the songbird concert. The thrushes, warblers and vireos had been in full chorus for about 10 minutes when the baritone from the hemlocks decided it was time to announce to the ladies of this mountain that the boss was now open for business.

He gobbled twice a minute for the next few minutes with such ferocity that I was concerned hunters in several neighboring states might hear him. Before long I let him know an eager young lady was present, giving him a short series of muffled tree yelps and a few random clucks. King Tom went berserk, and I figured that unless a real hen intervened, this old boy would be in view within a matter of minutes. He was now gobbling almost continuously, but I waited him out until I finally heard him fly down. I grinned under my facemask and watched in Dad's direction, waiting for the shot.

Nothing happened for several minutes, so I gave him a few "wass up" clucks. A moment later he gobbled, but he seemed to have doubled his distance from us. I remained cool and gave him some of my most seductive purrs and clucks on my Tuscarora slate. It took him all of a minute to respond and he was now even farther away than before. I knew we had him right where we wanted him!

I crept down to Dad and we silently moved about 200 yards in the direction of

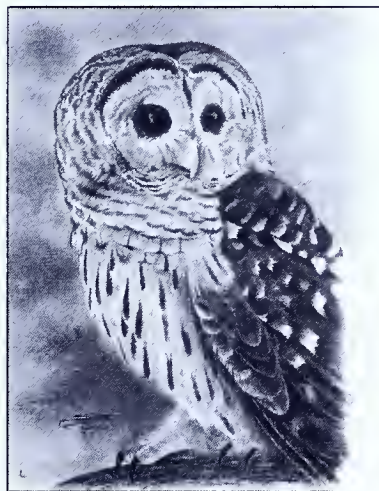
his last gobble. After getting set up I clucked and yelped a few times and the gobbler responded almost immediately. (I consider a time lapse of only four or five minutes as being almost immediately.) I gave a few more clucks and, true to form, he gobbled about five minutes later and had again moved even farther away. My confidence from the previous evening was fading rapidly.

The woodpeckers were hammering away and some crows were apparently harassing an owl across the hollow; it was time for another move. I grinned as I crept up to Dad and mentioned to him that we might have to let this fellow grow for another day or two. He grinned back and we crept out another 150

yards and got settled in.

The time for a change in tactics had arrived, so I started cutting with my mouth call. I abandoned the conservative approach and went into a demanding hot hen routine. I called nonstop for 30 seconds before the gobbler responded. I called louder and longer and his response time began decreasing rapidly. My continued calling had him really worked up, and it was soon evident that he was closing in quickly. I could soon see bits and pieces of a huge strutting gobbler with a blaze red head about 80 yards in front of Dad. As he disappeared from my view, I began to cluck ever so softly with my slate call.

We had been working him for several hours and I was sure he was finally committed. The final scene was approaching, and as I tried to locate his royal majesty my eyeballs were roll-



ing back and forth like windshield wipers on the high setting. The next gobble directed my attention 45 degrees to my right, and I realized he must have been taking a wide arc around my Dad. I soon heard him walking in the leaves accompanied by the sound of almost constant drumming. I knew he must have been out of range as he swung around Dad and was now almost in my lap. I could only see 20 yards in the direction of the gobble before the ridge dropped off gently into a long sloping bench. I was lined up about 30 degrees to the right of where I thought he would make his appearance; his next gobble let me know he was definitely in range if I could only coax him into view.

My saliva was at the dangerously low level, but I still managed about a half cluck. His gobble was deafening; I knew things were really going to start happening. My eyes searched for several seconds and suddenly I heard a noise slightly to my right. Unable to imagine how the gobble had gotten over into that location, I rolled my eyeballs ever so slowly to their corner limits and my body went into a cold sweat. Instead of focusing on my prize gobble, my eyes locked into two ratty looking bucks with chunks of winter hair missing and 3 or 4 inches of new velvet antler growth. They were about 15 yards away, heading straight at me, and I could feel a slight breeze on the back of my neck. I remember only one thought flashing through my brain: Isn't this a revolting predicament.

I knew the bucks would wind me

in a matter of seconds, and then those two unwanted pains in the posterior would begin snorting and ruin the hunt. I had no choice but to let nature take its course and hope for the best.

I gave several soft clucks to try and quickly lure the gobble into view before the two bucks bolted and terminated the hunt. As the two clucks filled the air, both bucks immediately fixed their gaze on my position and then abruptly swung their heads to their right as the gobble thundered back a mini-second later. I knew they were now watching the gobble, and it was really a neat sight to behold.

My confidence, however, was still evaporating quickly, so I clucked again, only to have the lead buck begin stomping his hoof. Both bucks bolted about 10 yards, turned, eyed me again, and then broke into a snorting contest. I shook my fist at them and they bounded away, snorting as they departed. Deer have an amazing sense of curiosity

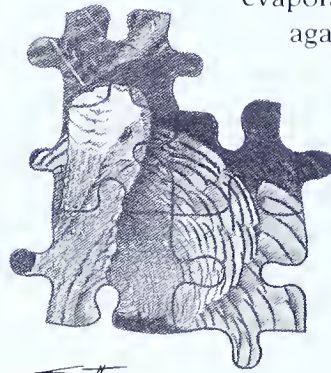
that is totally lacking in a turkey. I have never seen a curious turkey, and I knew my gobble had fled the area with the first foot stomp. He didn't have a clue as to what was up, but I could visualize him breaking strut and beating his little feet out of there.

I relaxed and leaned back against my tree and watched Dad slowly get up and gather his paraphernalia. He headed up to me with a big grin on his face and said, "that sure was one mighty lucky gobble."

"Yeah," I said, "I could do everything except see him, and then those two bucks showed up at the worst possible moment."

Dad laughed and replied, "Oh, you don't really want to get one this early, it's only the first week of the season."

I nodded and smiled, Dad always had a knack of keeping things in the right perspective. □



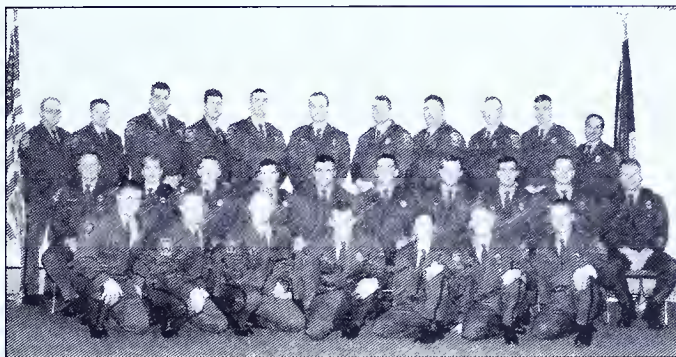
scott
alpino

Graduation Day

Photos by Bob D'Angelo

Game News Associate Editor

THE Pennsylvania Game Commission held graduation ceremonies for its 26th Class of wildlife conservation officer trainees on Saturday, March 9, 2002, at Hershey High School.



Joe Osman

Members of the class reported to the Ross Leffler School of Conservation training facility at the Harrisburg headquarters on March 18, 2001. The 50-week training program included intensive classroom instruction and field training in wildlife management, law enforcement, wildlife laws and regulations, land management practices, conservation education, public relations, firearms and unarmed self-defense. As new district WCOs, they are responsible to administer a wide variety of commission programs within their districts. There are 135 WCO districts throughout the state. Members of the 26th Class, their hometowns and their new assignments are:

Northwest Region:

Daniel P. Schmidt, West Hickory, to the region office in Franklin.

Northcentral Region:

Ricky A. Deiterich, Bloomsburg, to the region office in Jersey Shore; Clint J. Deniker, Grove City, to Cameron County; and Kristoffer R. Krebs, Jim Thorpe, to the region office.

Northeast Region:

David P. Allen, Trucksville, to Luzerne County; Gerald L. Kapral, Trucksville, to the region office in Dallas; James P. McCarthy, Hallstead, to the region office; Raymond W. O'Donnell Jr., Frackville, to Northumberland County; and Carl M. Szymanski, Taylor, to Bradford County.

Southwest Region:

Travis J. Anderson, Somerset, to the region office in Ligonier; Beth A. Fife, Venetia, to Allegheny County; and Justin T. Klugh, Dillsburg, to the region office.

Southcentral Region:

Richard W. Joyce, Leckrone, to the region office in Huntingdon; and Travis A. Pugh, Chambersburg, to Fulton County.

Southeast Region:

Glen Campbell, Kutztown, to Bucks County; Jason L. DeCoskey, Camp Hill, to Dauphin County; Chad R. Eyler, West York, to York County; Scott S. Frederick, Red Lion, to Chester County; Amy B. Gladfelter, Huntingdon, to the region office in Reading; John M. Papon, Trumbauersville, to Bucks County; John W. Veylupek, Pittsburgh, to the region office; and Jonathan S. Zuck, Elizabethtown, to Lancaster County.

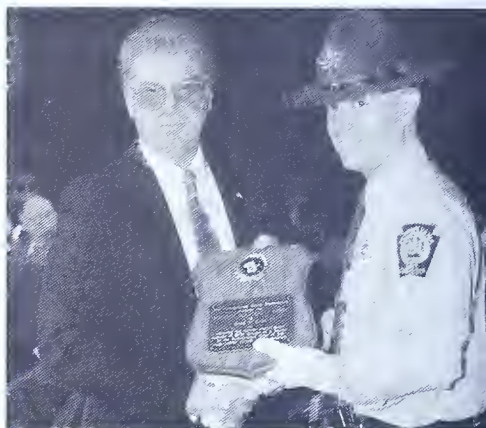


GAME COMMISSION Northeast Region Color Guard and the Quittapahilla Highlanders Bagpipe and Drum Band opened the graduation ceremony at Hershey High School.



Pennsylvania State Police Colonel **PAUL J. EVANKO** delivered the graduation's keynote address.

Graduating Officer **CHAD R. EYLER** was class speaker, as well as the academic achievement award winner for the 26th Class. PGC Deputy Executive Director **MICHAEL SCHMIT** presents the award.



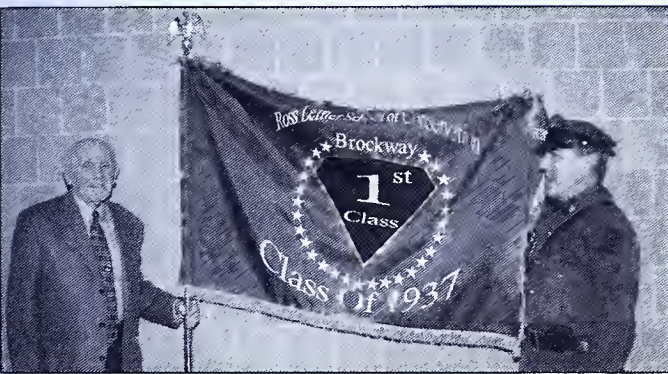
District Justice **DOMINIC A. PELINO** from Hummelstown gave the oath of office to the 26th Class.

PGC Deputy Executive Director **HOWARD HARSHAW** hands out diplomas to the 26th Class. Officer **TRAVIS ANDERSON** receives his.





Deputy Executive Director **HOWARD HARSHAW** presents the fitness award for maintaining the highest standard of physical fitness during the 50-week training period to WCO graduate **JOHN W. VEYLUPEK**, right, and the torch award to graduate **SCOTT S. FREDERICK**, left.



CLYDE E. LAUBACH, who graduated from the 1st Class of the Ross Leffler School of Conservation in 1937, with recently retired WCO **BILL BOWER** in a 1930s style Game Commission uniform.



Deputy Executive Director **MIKE SCHMIT** presents the marksmanship award to WCO graduate **RAYMOND W. O'DONNELL JR.**



WCO GRADUATES couldn't have made it without encouragement, support and sacrifice from family members.

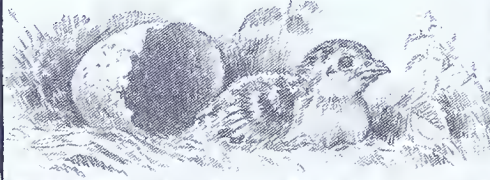


A **WREATH** dedication and tribute was held at the graduation ceremony for the police officers and firefighters who lost their lives in the September 11 terrorist attacks, and for those servicemen in Afghanistan.

Penn's Woods Sketchbook

Longbeard Spring

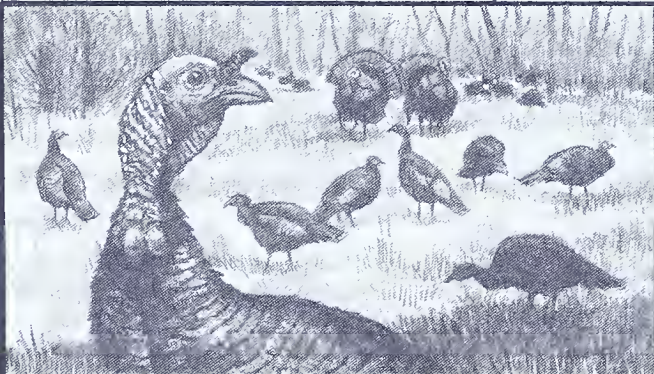
Written and Illustrated
by
Bob Sopchick



What came first, the turkey or the egg?



The best answer to this riddle is: Neither, it was the gobble. In late February gobbling intensifies with lengthening daylight, heralding the onset of the breeding season.



A large winter flock breaks up into smaller bands. Among them, a mature longbeard in his third year.



The longbeard fights other toms, establishing a hierarchy, emerging as the dominant tom.



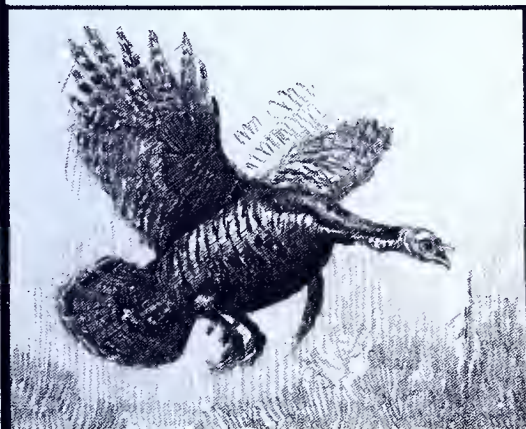
With his authority asserted and the pecking order established, the trio of courting gobblers accompanies a group of hens.



The longbeard gobbles several times during the night.



He gobbles again from his roost at first light, strutting the length of his perch . . .



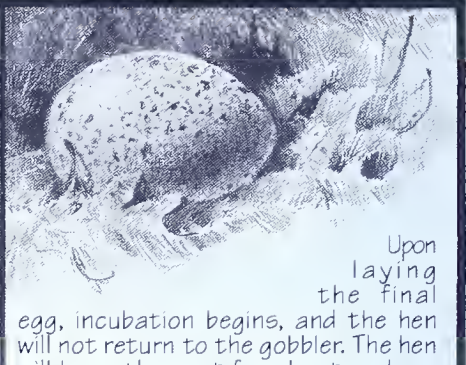
. . . then flies down into a clearing where he struts and gobbles some more.



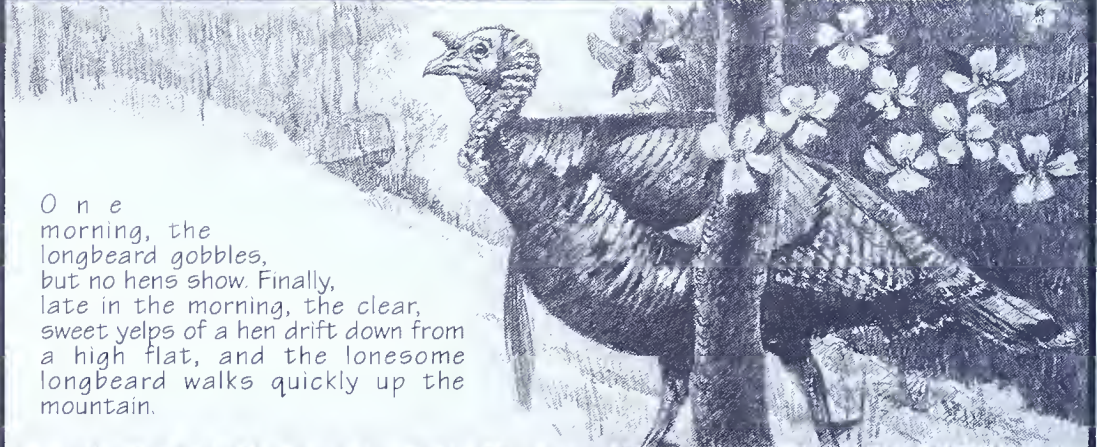
Several hens emerge, followed by the pair of gobblers. The dominant longbeard does most of the breeding. At midmorning a hen slips away to her nest.



The nest is little more than a small depression in the leaves. During the next 10 days she'll lay a clutch of 13 eggs.



Upon laying the final egg, incubation begins, and the hen will not return to the gobbler. The hen will leave the nest for about an hour a day to feed and drink. The eggs hatch at about 26 days.



One morning, the longbeard gobblers, but no hens show. Finally, late in the morning, the clear, sweet yelps of a hen drift down from a high flat, and the lonesome longbeard walks quickly up the mountain.



He peers over the lip of the flat, but can't see the hen, although he knows exactly where she should be.



A young hunter sits at the base of a wild cherry tree. His father, seated behind him, clucks softly and the gobbler starts across the flat.

The gold bead of the boy's shotgun weaves a tiny figure eight around the gobbler's neck. He swallows hard and blinks when the longbeard gobbles, then pulls the trigger when the gobbler raises its head.

Through the venue of the hunt, the relationship between father and son grows stronger; that core now laminated between the ancient alliance of cooperative hunters and a mutual, but unspoken, allegiance to the land — this amalgam welded forever now by the gobble of the wild turkey.



The longbeard's tenure in the uplands was rich and varied. He knew brittle, January nights under star-draped skies, and humid September evenings when katydid song echoed through the hollows. With pinching gut, he endured ice storms that held the flock on roost for days, and crammed his crop with acorn mast on sunny October afternoons. In summer fields he had feasted on grasshoppers scattering in his wake, and had filed into somber winter seeps, raking sodden leaves for meager fare. He had seen 1,055 sunrises and 1,055 sunsets of every hue and temperament. His mostly peaceful life was interspersed with a few intense moments of danger — he eluded coyote and bobcat, and last spring, the young hunter's father.



Dozens of the longbeard's progeny will soon be gleaning the grassy fields for protein-rich insects. They'll begin autumn keen and strong, then fatten on mast. Those that survive the winter will witness the rites of spring, and the hills will echo with the selfsame voice that was the longbeard's, announcing that the fountainhead of renewal spouts again.

One Lucky Day

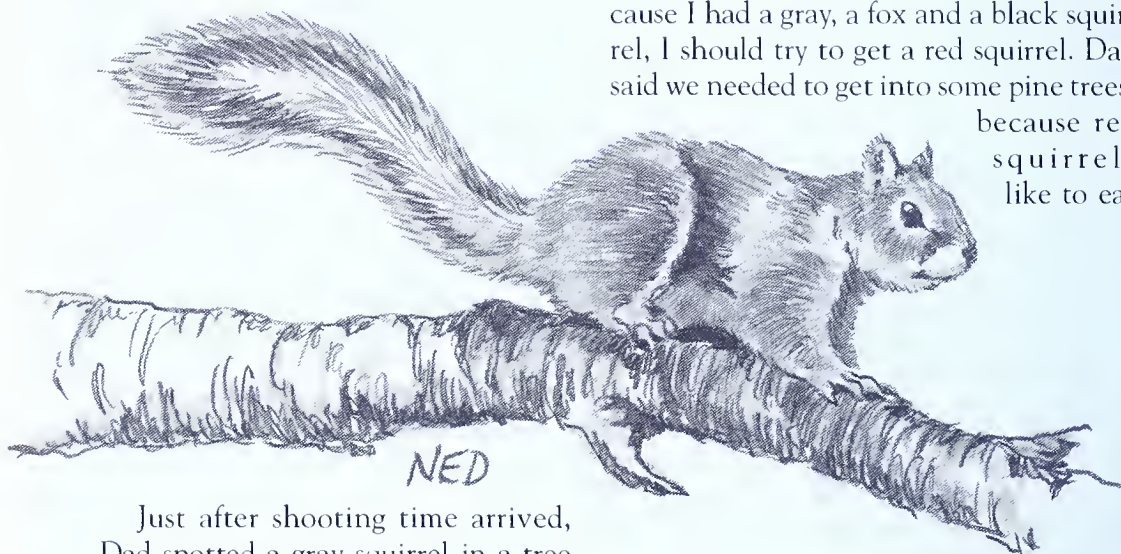
By Perry Bruno

THE FOG was lifting off of the lake as my father and I arrived at my uncle's cabin on the cool, damp opening morning of the special youth squirrel hunt. We walked down a logging road and turned up a steep hill. Finally, after walking for what seemed like an eternity, we arrived at our spot. We sat down by a big tree and waited for daybreak.

I was just enjoying the morning, listening to Canada geese lift off the lake, when I spotted a black squirrel. I put the shotgun bead on it and pulled the trigger. The bushytail dropped and I had my first black squirrel and third squirrel of the day. My dad was so happy for me, and it had been such an exciting morning that we went back to the cabin and took some pictures.

That afternoon I said to Dad that because I had a gray, a fox and a black squirrel, I should try to get a red squirrel. Dad said we needed to get into some pine trees,

because red squirrels like to eat



Just after shooting time arrived, Dad spotted a gray squirrel in a tree that was too far away to shoot. We continued to watch the tree and were amazed when a fox squirrel and then a black squirrel scampered down the trunk and fed out of sight.

A few minutes later another gray squirrel appeared, and after it got to within 15 yards of me I had my first squirrel of the day. We noticed a lot of squirrels feeding on the ground near the tree where we had watched the three squirrels come down, so we decided to head that way. We weren't there five minutes before a fox squirrel ran up the tree. I got it with one shot.

pinecone seeds. After getting our gear together, we went to a pine thicket and sat right in the middle of it. Within five minutes I spotted a red squirrel running on the ground and when it jumped into a pine right in front of me, I shot it.

Dad said he had never heard of anyone getting the four types of squirrels in one day. It was truly my lucky day in the woods. Dad said that he was sure my grandfather, who had passed away, was watching over me, because he liked to hunt squirrels more than anything else. I'm so grateful to the Game Commission, too, for allowing the special youth squirrel hunt. □



FIELD NOTES



Confused Wildlife

ELK — In late February I noticed several grouse drumming and strutting, and had many reports of bucks still carrying antlers.

— WCO DICK BODENHORN, RIDGWAY

Sticky Cat

SOMERSET — A trapper here caught and released a bobcat, but the feline immediately took refuge up under the frame of his truck. I couldn't reach it with my snare pole, so I suggested that he slowly drive the truck down the field, thinking that would dislodge the cat. When that didn't work I suggested that he jump up and down in the bed of the truck. That was too much for the bobcat to take, as it dropped down from the frame and hit the ground running, kicking up dust as it ran down the farm lane.

— WCO BRIAN WITHERITE, MEYERSDALE

Doesn't Make Sense

POTTER — An individual was telling me that he thought the cost of his Pennsylvania archery license was too high, but in his next breath he mentioned he was leaving to hunt elk and mule deer in Montana, where his license cost him \$1,100.

— WCO WILLIAM C. RAGOSTA, COUDERSPORT

Good Reminder

MONROE — It seems nearly every hunter my deputies and I encountered during the hunting season were using handheld radios. Several hunters were under the impression that using these radios to communicate with their youngsters satisfied the regulation of accompanying a junior hunter. When taking a junior license holder hunting, it's the responsibility of the guardian to be close enough to give verbal instruction and guidance that is easily understood. Being present and sharing in a youngster's harvest should be as rewarding to you as it is to them. Also, using radios to aid in the taking of game is not permitted.

— WCO MARK RUTKOWSKI, SWIFTWATER

Never Too Old

UNION — During bear season I met Henry Schmidt, Sr. from Hummelstown, who had spent the entire morning on stand at the top of a mountain near R.B. Winter State Park. Mr. Schmidt was looking forward to getting a bear and celebrating his 88th birthday.

— WCO BERNARD J. SCHMADER, MILLMONT

Well-Deserved

MONTGOMERY/NORTHUMBERLAND — When I was just six years old Bill Bower became a WCO. He has been an important part of the agency for more than 33 years, and with his recent retirement, he passed the torch of conservation to another generation of dedicated officers. I believe I speak for the entire agency when I offer a sincere thank you to Bill for his commitment during the past three decades. I also would be remiss if I failed to mention the tremendous contribution made by Bill's wife Mary Alice during his career.

— WCO RANDY SHOUP, DANVILLE

Nothing Fancy

SCHUYLKILL — I couldn't help but chuckle as radio dispatcher Ed Shutter coordinated the delivery of turkeys that had been trapped and were being transferred to an area in the southeast. Ed dropped the formality of referring to the birds by their scientific name, and asked if the "gobble-gobbles" were on the way.

— WCO JOHN DENCHAK, GORDON

Get Involved

I read that two acres of farmland are lost every minute of each day in the U.S., which is nearly one million acres a year. Decisions made today about open spaces, farmland preservation, and urban and suburban sprawl will be ones our children and grandchildren will have to live with. Become a member of a local conservation organization active in land preservation, environmental education and resource conservation.

— LMO EDWARD J. ZINDELL, GOULDSBORO

Reaping the Rewards

DELAWARE — Once in a while a hunter resents being checked in the field by a WCO, claiming it interrupts his hunt, but hunters should consider the benefits. Foremost, no law-abiding hunter wants to be in an area where illegal activity, such as baiting, is taking place. Then there's another benefit, such as driving game to a hunter. After checking a hunter during deer season, I was circling back around to my vehicle when I spooked a bedded trophy buck that ran right to the man.

— WCO DARREN J. DAVID, ASTON

Just a Reminder

CLINTON — A trapper here who had a bobcat harvest permit caught a bobcat by suspending a turkey wing by a string over his trap. Furtakers need to be aware that it is unlawful to bait a trap with meat or animal parts if the bait is visible from the air. The intent of this law is to prevent the capture of protected birds of prey.

— WCO JOHN WASSERMAN, RENOVO

Robo Fish?

ARMSTRONG — WCO Alan Scott and I were serving a warrant on a young man who had been cited for shooting at our deer decoy from a vehicle, when his mother told us her son took a lot of ribbing from family members about the incident. She said she had told him he had better not cast to any trout that he saw with the fins moving quickly, because it might be a decoy trout to catch anglers fishing before the season, and she was not going to pay another fine for him.

— WCO BARRY J. SETH, WORTHINGTON



Pick On Someone Your Own Size

BUTLER — I got a call about an owl in a school and after arriving I spotted a saw-whet owl perched on a fire alarm. I was explaining to school officials about leaving some windows open, so the owl would fly out, when the football coach — a burly muscle-bound man — with several of his players gathered around said, "Hey, can you guarantee that owl ain't gonna come down and attack me? I watch the Discovery channel." I asked him how tall he was and how much he weighed. He promptly responded, "I weigh 235 pounds and am 6-2." I told him that on a good day a saw-whet owl might weight five ounces, and that I thought he'd have a good chance against the bird. The coach then took some ribbing from his team.

— WCO MARIO L. PICCIRILLI, RENFREW

Could Have Been Worse

BRADFORD — Just before Christmas Shane O'Toole brought me an injured screech owl that had been hit with a vehicle. The owl was in a cardboard box and I placed it in my home office to keep overnight for observation. The next morning my wife was making coffee when the owl flew by her head. Needless to say, I was quickly instructed to capture the owl. I told my wife that at least the owl didn't take up residence in the Christmas tree.

— WCO VERNON PERRY, MONROETON

You Never Know

While replacing parking area signs on SGL 70, Game Lands Maintenance Supervisor Allen Anke discovered a folded dollar bill tucked behind one of the signs. I suggested that perhaps the person was used to parking meters, or maybe they were just pleased with the job the crew was doing and left a tip.

— LMO JOHN SHUTKUFSKI, DAMASCUS

Cats Galore

GREENE — I've had reports of eight bobcats being caught here by fox and coyote trappers, and I helped trappers release four of these beautiful predators myself.

— WCO RODNEY BURNS, WAYNESBURG

Just Won't Go Away

BRADFORD — A WCO is responsible for maintaining an adequate deputy force. It's my job to see that individuals wishing to become a deputy have not only the physical agility, desire and dedication, but also the mental and psychological capabilities needed to perform under all types of situations. Just recently a guy named Bill Bower applied for the job. I'm not sure if he has the qualifications, especially the psychological ones, I'm looking for. His only qualification is that he's recently retired after 34 years as a WCO. Maybe his wife, Mary Alice, could whip up a batch of her famous lasagna to help in my decision on whether or not to take him.

— WCO MATTHEW GREBECK, E. SMITHFIELD



Needs Some Mouth Wash

WYOMING — Rod Azar was hunting in a swamp with his golden retriever, Guy, when the dog went on point. Odd behavior for a retriever, Rod thought, but what the heck. "Go get it!" he called, and his dog jumped into the brush and emerged with a skunk in its mouth. Guy immediately headed for his master, and Rod cleared 25 yards of swamp without even getting wet.

— WCO WILLIAM WASSERMAN, TUNKHANNOCK

Useful Information

LYCOMING — When I was a resident instructor for the 26th Class at the Ross Leffler School I had to chuckle at the nicknames some of the trainees picked up along the way. Here are just a few: "Two Left Feet," "The Colonel," "Quarter Tank," referring to a running out of gas incident, and "Gutpile." I won't embarrass the new officers by placing a real name with a nickname, but I'm sure the inside knowledge will come in handy some day.

— WCO JONATHAN M. WYANT, MONTGOMERYVILLE

Thief in the Night

FULTON — Just at dusk one evening Deputy Norm Carr noticed a red-tailed hawk fly across a road clutching a squirrel in its talons, but then was astonished to see a great-horned owl fly up behind the hawk and knock the squirrel loose. The owl then flew off with its stolen merchandise.

— WCO STEPHEN A. LEIENDECKER, NEEDMORE

"Tomboy"

VENANGO — One day last winter 10 turkeys were feeding within three feet of my deck in the back of the house. Interestingly, nine were gobblers with beards from two to seven inches and only one was a hen.

— WCO LEONARD C. HRIBAR, OIL CITY



Frisky Toms

ALLEGHENY — Just about everyone knows that there is no shortage of turkeys here, and now our gobblers are getting a bit rambunctious. Last year a pair attacked joggers and vehicles in the McCandles Township/North Park area, and this year gobblers are pecking and flying into mailmen walking their routes in Ross Township. I've found these encounters to be the result of some well-intentioned residents feeding the birds, causing them to lose their fear of humans.

— WCO GARY M. FUJAK, CORAOPOLIS

Got Him Pegged

WCO Don Chaybin put on a wildlife program for students at the Oakview Elementary School, and the kids and teachers just loved him. After Don left, one of the teachers asked a group of youngsters if they now know what a wildlife conservation officer does. A little girl blurted out, "They play games all day." Perhaps I shouldn't have gone into land management.

— LMO JAMES E. DENIKER, SANDY LAKE

Grateful

SCHUYLKILL — I'm transferring to Perry County, where I'm originally from, so I wanted to thank many people for their support over the last 13 years. There are the deputies, who literally put their lives on the line to enforce wildlife laws, and also the Hunter-Trapper Ed instructors. It was a real pleasure working with fellow officers WCO John Denchak and LMO Matt Belding. The Schuylkill Conservation District and the Schuylkill County Sportsmen's Association are two outstanding organizations that enhance the hunting heritage within the county. Finally, a big thank you goes out to all the citizens of the district for allowing me to serve as your WCO.

— WCO STEVE HOWER, PINE GROVE

Dedication

INDIANA — My first year as a deputy WCO was extremely educational and exciting, but I haven't determined who incurred the greater expense, the individuals who violated the game law or myself. My vehicle is covered in scratches, has four bald tires, and needs a new transmission. I can't wait until next season.

— DEPUTY BRIAN R. SUPKO, CORAL

Had Something There

BUTLER/LAWRENCE — WES Kevin Thompson and I were showing slides of birds and mammals to students at Mohawk Elementary School when the ruffed grouse photo came up on the screen. When Kevin asked the students if they knew how it got its name, one boy said that it must be because it's "rough" to hit.

— WCO RANDY W. PILARCIK, PORTERSVILLE

Outside Looking In

MONTGOMERY — I stopped to talk to a group of hunters standing around a pickup during deer season, and then noticed a nice buck in the back of the truck. It seems the owner of the vehicle was so excited about his son's buck that he locked his keys inside the truck.

— WCO BILL VROMAN, FREDERICK

Close

CRAWFORD — I was discussing the physical characteristics of a turkey with a third grade class at Alice Shaffer Elementary School when I asked if anyone knew what the red fleshy skin on a turkey's neck is called. One eager young lad yelled, "That's his waddler."

— WCO MARK A. ALLEGRO, MEADVILLE

No Chance

FRANKLIN — WCO Travis Pugh was still a trainee when he and I inspected a wildlife propagator's deer pens. A young buck in the pen began sniffing my green tie, and I could tell immediately that Travis was waiting for the deer to begin eating my tie, so he could get a Field Note out of it. Sorry, Travis, it never happened.

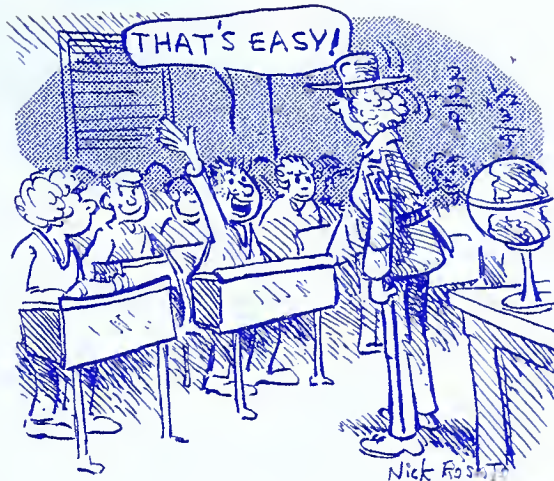
— WCO BARRY A. LEONARD, CHAMBERSBURG



Good for All

FOREST — I was checking out an area that had been clear-cutted when I noticed the tracks of a fisher, a bobcat and a coyote in a short section of a logging road. It was apparent these predators knew they would find far more opportunities for a meal in the clearcut than they would in the surrounding mature forest. Proper timber management is one of the best ways we can improve wildlife habitat for a variety of species, no matter where they may be on the food chain.

— WCO RICHARD T. CRAMER, TIONESTA



Good Answer

WESTMORELAND — When WCO Beth Fife was still a trainee, she and I were talking to second grade students at Saltsburg Elementary School about predators and how they fit into nature and the food chain when she asked what name is used to describe animals eaten by predators. An excited young boy waved his hand and said, "victims."

— WCO GARY TOWARD, HYDE PARK

Unpredictable

HUNTINGDON — During the otter reintroduction in Bedford County in February several officers were assigned to stand along the river bank to deter any of the otters from turning back towards the shore, so they'd swim downstream. When the otters were released, though, three swam straight across the river and climbed up over a cliff where a mountain goat would have trouble going.

— WCO ROBERT A. EINODSHOFER, HUNTINGDON

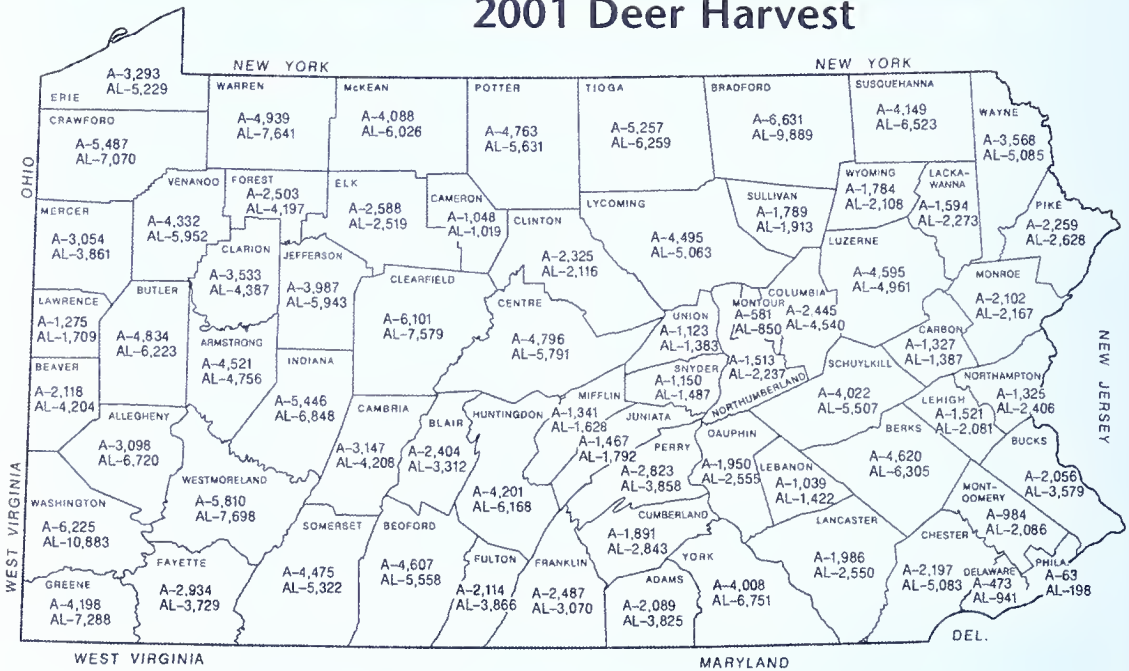
Dangerous

DAUPHIN — Many people don't realize that the Game Commission is responsible for regulating exotic wildlife. Recently, I got a call about a cougar being kept in a one-bedroom apartment in Harrisburg. The animal wasn't even caged, and could have easily escaped.

— WCO MARK FAIR, MIDDLETOWN

Conservation News

2001 Deer Harvest



486,014 deer taken in 2001-02

HUNTERS took 486,014 deer during 2001-02, down slightly from the 504,600 taken in 2000-01. The 2001-02 antlered (buck) harvest was 203,247, virtually the same as the 203,221 taken the year before. The 2001-02 antlerless (doe) harvest was 282,767, down slightly from 2000-01's antlerless harvest of 301,379.

Hunter success rates on antlerless deer during the concurrent season were not as high as expected. This may have been due to several factors, including weather and hunter behavior. The season was one of if not the warmest ever.

“Although many hunters could shoot multiple deer on the same day,” said PGC biologist Bret Wallingford, “many may have decided to quit af-

ter getting just one, so they could get it out of the woods and cooled down as soon as possible. Also, being our first concurrent season, many hunters may have passed on antlerless deer early on, only to not go back out, or to find that antlerless deer were not as easy to find later in the season. After a few more years of concurrent seasons, we'll have a better idea of what to expect, as will hunters."

In October, flintlock hunters took approximately 8,800 antlerless deer during the one-week season, and junior and senior hunters took 13,700 in the three days.

Each winter, using harvest results, the Game Commission calculates what the previous fall's pre-season deer population was. Using this year's

harvest numbers, the deer herd in huntable areas was estimated to be 1.37 million, 8 percent lower than the 1.5 million projected a year ago. This estimate does not include Special Regulations Area counties (Allegheny, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia).

Dr. Gary Alt, head of the Game Commission's Deer Management Section, noted that the 2001-02 antlerless harvest, even though lower than expected, still resulted in an 8 percent reduction in the deer population (post-hunting season), essentially right in line with the 5 percent reduction the 2001-02 allocations were designed to achieve.

"By slowly bringing the deer herd

down, we hope to get the number of deer in balance with the habitat," Alt said. "In some areas, we must push for further reductions, to allow the habitat to recover from decades of overbrowsing. However, in other areas, we can aim to stabilize the herd."

Of the 486,014 deer harvested in 2001-02, bowhunters took 74,051 (40,753 antlered and 33,298 antlerless), compared to 78,522 (38,453 antlered and 40,069 antlerless) in 2000-01. Flintlock hunters harvested 25,817 (2,127 antlered and 23,690 antlerless) compared to 30,405 (1,189 antlered and 29,216 antlerless) in 2000-01. Rifle hunters took 386,146 (160,367 antlered and 225,779 antlerless).

River otters return to southcentral Pennsylvania

THE JUNIATA RIVER drainage has seven new residents: Five female and two male river otters from New York were released in the river near Everett, Bedford County, as part of a cooperative reintroduction project by the Game Commission, Frostburg State University, the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' Wild Resource Conservation Program (WRCP) and other, local partners.

This release was the first step in a 2-year project that will see the release of up to 40 otters in the Juniata watershed. Additional animals will be captured by WCOs in northern Pennsylvania, where otter populations remain at higher levels, and others may be obtained from Maryland. Future releases are planned for Lake Raystown, in cooperation with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Willis A. Sneath, Game Commission Southcentral Region Director, sees the release as an historic accomplishment of the Game Commission.

"During the late 19th century, declining water quality and unregulated trapping caused river otters to disappear from most of Pennsylvania's waterways, including the Juniata," Sneath said. "The enactment of clean water regulations and closed season protection for the otter has permitted this playful aquatic denizen to return to its former range."

Dr. Tom Serfass, associate professor of biology at Frostburg State University, noted that this otter release is cause for celebration. "Releasing otters into the Juniata drainage celebrates the return of a cleaner environment. River otters will not tolerate polluted water. This is an environmental success story we can all enjoy."

Purchase of the river otters from New York was made possible through funding from the Wild Resource Conservation Fund. One of the sources of revenue for the WRCF is the sale of license plates featuring the river otter.

"This is a fine spirit of cooperation between state agencies, conservation groups, private citizens and institutions of higher education," said Frank H. Felbaum, WRCF director. "It's amazing what can be accomplished when everyone has one vision and goal in mind."

Dr. Matthew Lovallo, Game Commission furbearer biologist, said that the Juniata River was the last suitable location in Pennsylvania where otters had yet to make a substantive come-

back. "We know of occasional sightings in this drainage," Dr. Lovallo said. "But largely, this is a suitable habitat that can support an established otter population if given a jump-start through a reintroduction program."

River otters are elusive aquatic members of the weasel family weighing 10 to 25 pounds. The bulk of their diet consists of crayfish and fish, such as suckers and minnows. They make their dens on the edges of lakes, rivers and streams. Otters can live 10 to 20 years.

For more information on river otters, go to the Game Commission's website and click on "Wildlife," then choose "Assorted Wildlife Notes" and "River Otter."

Furtakers harvest 146 bobcats

DURING 2001-02 (Oct. 13 through Feb. 23), 520 licensed furtakers with bobcat permits harvested 146 bobcats. Bobcats were taken in 19 of the 20 open counties: Bradford, 7; Cameron, 8; Centre, 4; Clearfield, 13; Clinton, 14; Elk, 5; Forest, 3; Lackawanna, 1; Luzerne, 4; Lycoming, 15; McKean, 9; Monroe, 2; Pike, 3; Potter, 18; Sullivan, 17; Susquehanna, 1; Tioga, 14; Wayne, 5; and Wyoming, 3.

Game Commission staff collected biological data and samples from every bobcat, including: basic body measurements; tissue samples; stomachs; blood samples; kidneys; and reproductive tracts from females. A canine tooth also was collected from each bobcat and will be used to determine the animal's age. This information, combined with similar information we obtain from roadkilled bobcats, is then used to estimate the health and the age and sex composi-

tion of Pennsylvania's bobcat population.

A survey has been mailed to permit recipients who did not report taking a bobcat, to assess participation and harvest effort. The results, combined with biological information collected during the season, will be used to determine the number of permits that will be allocated for 2002-03 seasons, which will be set later this year.

"All indicators suggest that bobcat populations continue to expand throughout the commonwealth," said Dr. Matthew Lovallo, Game Commission wildlife biologist and author of the agency's bobcat management plan. "In addition to northeast and northcentral counties, bobcat populations are well established in many central, southcentral and southwestern counties, which currently are not open to hunting."

2002 Elk survey canceled due to lack of snow

UNUSUALLY MILD winter weather and a lack of snow caused the 2002 elk survey to be canceled.

The survey is conducted using fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters, and is based on recording sightings of a known number of collared elk. Adequate snow cover and the increased visibility it provides is critical to the success of this technique, so observers can clearly see elk from the air.

The January 2001 survey indicated

the population was 622. The current herd is believed to number around 700. Between the January 2001 survey and the end of January 2002, 64 elk, including the 27 taken during the 2001 elk hunt, are known to have died.

Other mortality losses in 2001 included: 10 unknown; 9 illegal kills; 7 in highway accidents; 5 for crop damage; 2 in train accidents; 2 to brainworm; and 2 to other accidents.

Cogan departs PGC for RMEF

RAWLEY COGAN, who began working for the Game Commission in 1982 and spearheaded the elk program that represents one of the agency's most significant accomplishments, has left the Game Commission to take a position with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF).

Cogan was instrumental in designing and implementing the 3-year elk trap-and-transfer program in the mid-1990s, and the first elk hunt in more than seven decades. He also was a prime architect in planning and launching the 2001 Elk Expo, and the 7-year habitat improvement challenge program that will result in a \$1.7 million investment in habitat improvements in the elk range from the Game Commission, the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the Rocky Mountain Elk

Foundation and other conservation partners.

Cogan's research has been used as a model by Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and Wisconsin — all of which have elk herds to manage; and New York, which currently is undergoing a feasibility study to determine if elk should be reintroduced there.

In his new capacity, Cogan will serve as RMEF Senior Development Officer, and will be responsible for identifying and cultivating support for RMEF projects in Pennsylvania, New York and other New England states. Because of his experiences with the Game Commission, Cogan also will serve a secondary role by working with state and federal agencies to further elk management and restoration projects in other northeastern states.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

PGC Southwest Region office moved

THE GAME Commission's Southwest Region Office has moved into its new headquarters in the former Fairfield Elementary School.

The region office's mailing address remains P.O. Box A, Ligonier, PA 15658, as do the region phone numbers, 724-238-9523, 1-877-877-7137.

The move was made possible in January 2001, when the Board of Game Commissioners approved a land exchange with the Ligonier Valley School District in which the

Game Commission's Southwest Regional Office would move into the Fairfield Elementary School along Route 711 North. In return, the School District's administrative offices and maintenance vehicles would move to the Game Commission's Southwest Region Office on West Main Street in downtown Ligonier.

Through the exchange, the Game Commission Southwest Region Office more than doubled its available office space.



A dedication was held this past November to acknowledge two key acquisitions to SGL 162 in Erie County, and honor the conservation groups and individuals who made these acquisitions possible. The two new parcels were especially important because they connected different portions of SGL 162 and also greatly enhanced access to this game lands. Making this acquisition possible were the Northwest Pennsylvania Duck Hunters, Ducks Unlimited, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and, perhaps most importantly, DICK and MEREDITH RAWA, previous owners of the tracts.

CONTACTING THE REGION OFFICES

Northwest — 877-877-0299
Southwest — 877-877-7137
Northcentral — 877-877-7674

Southcentral — 877-877-9107
Northeast — 877-877-9357
Southeast — 877-877-9470

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of endangered species or multiple big game animals. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.

Middle Creek lectures

AN EXCITING lineup of programs is on tap at the Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area.

May 8 & 9 "Important Bird Areas" Steve Hoffman, of Pennsylvania Audubon, will discuss the Important Bird Area program and the conservation of Pennsylvania's birdlife. He will provide an overview of Pennsylvania's contribution to bird populations in the Western Hemisphere, discuss long-term trends in populations, and summarize the most serious threats facing Pennsylvania's birds.

May 22 & 23 "The Tundra Swan" Tundra swans are among the most familiar species of waterfowl seen around Middle Creek. Yet, due to the remoteness of their Arctic breeding grounds, much remains unknown about this species. With the

use of satellites to track tundra swans on their cross-continent migratory journeys, however, many questions are now being addressed. Join PGC wildlife biologist Ian Gregg as he discusses ongoing research in Pennsylvania and nearby states on these fascinating birds.

June 5 & 6 "Pennsylvania Black Bear" PGC biologist Mark Ternent will offer an update on Pennsylvania's black bear, including the history of bears in Pennsylvania, and why, in the past 25 years, bears have tripled in number and range across Pennsylvania, and even the conflicts this expansion is causing.

The Middle Creek visitors center is south of Kleinfeltersville, Lebanon County. The programs are free and begin at 7:30 p.m.

Two former commissioners die

WITHIN the past several months, two former Pennsylvania Game Commissioners died, Paul E. Hickes, Jr., and Roy J. Wagner, Jr.

Hickes, from Huntingdon, served as a commissioner from March 24,

1980, through April 5, 1988. He was president in 1982.

Wagner, from York, was a commissioner from 1983 to 1997 (he was reappointed in 1989), and was president in 1989 and again in 1994.

Spring turkey season on tap

THE SPRING turkey season opens April 27 and runs through May 25. Only bearded birds are legal, and the season limit is one.

Hunting is by calling only, and the hours are one half hour before sunrise until noon. Turkey hunters should be out of the woods by 1 p.m. While moving, turkey hunters must wear at least 100 square inches of fluorescent orange on the head, or on the chest and back, visible 360 degrees. Fluorescent

orange does not have to be worn at calling locations, but it is strongly recommended that hunters do so.

Shotguns plugged to a 3-shell capacity in the magazine and chamber combined, muzzleloading shotguns, and bows with broadhead arrows of cutting edge design are permitted.

See the 2001-02 Hunting and Trapping Digest for complete turkey hunting regulations.

Avoid the “bear necessities”

WITH SPRING in full bloom, Pennsylvania's 14,000 bears are on the move. They'll all be looking for food, and many young bears, especially males, will be heading out on their own for the first time.

“With bears on the move, people living around bears should reduce the likelihood that their properties will attract bruins,” said PGC bear biologist Mark Ternent. “While Pennsylvania bears are, for the most part, timid, people need to understand a few things about how to avoid encounters with bears, and how they should react if they do encounter one.

“Habituating bears to humans leads to conflicts and the potential for serious injury. Feeding wildlife, whether for birds or deer, can attract bears. Once bears become habituated to an area where they can find food, they will continue to return, which is when bears become a problem for homeowners and neighbors.”

Capturing and moving nuisance bears is costly and sometimes ineffective, especially when faced with the possibility of moving a problem bear to another area where it may just cause problems there. That is why wildlife agencies around the country are trying to convince people that a “fed bear is a dead bear.”

To address the growing human/bear conflicts throughout the state, especially in the Poconos, the Game Commission created a Nuisance Black Bear Committee. In October, the Board of Game Commissioners received the committee's report, which recommended five actions:

- Reduce bear numbers in a portion of the northeast region by creating a second bear hunting season in Pike, Monroe and Carbon counties during the first week of firearms deer season in 2002;
- Draft a regulation that makes it unlawful to feed bears in situations that encourage nuisance bear problems;
- Increase large audience public education and outreach efforts to promote awareness and prevention of black bear problems;
- Develop negative-reinforcement conditioning and translocation guidelines; and
- Develop a statewide system for recording nuisance bear complaints.

A complete copy of the committee's report can be found at www.pgc.state.pa.us. Click on “Newsroom,” then select “2001 News Releases,” and choose “Release #81-01, October 2, 2001.”

Ternent also listed five suggestions that can prevent attracting bears to a property:

Play it smart: Do not feed wildlife. Food placed outside for wildlife can attract bears. Even birdfeeders can become “bear magnets.” And while bird feeding during the winter may be appropriate, at other times of the year it may not. Audubon Pennsylvania offered tips for how to safely feed birds in prime bear areas, including: avoid foods that are particularly attractive for bears, such as sunflower seeds, hummingbird nectar mixes or suet; and bring feeders inside at night or suspend feeders from high crosswires.

Keep it clean. Don't put out garbage until pick-up day; don't throw table scraps

out back; don't add fruit or vegetable wastes to your compost pile; and clean your barbecue grill regularly. If you have pets and feed them outdoors, consider placing food dishes inside overnight. Encourage your neighbors to do the same.

Keep your distance. If a bear shows up in your backyard, stay calm. Shout at it like you would to chase an unwanted dog. Don't approach it. If the bear won't leave, call the nearest Game Commission region office or local police department for assistance.

Eliminate temptation. Bears that visit your area are often drawn there. Neighbors need to work together to reduce an area's appeal to bears. Ask area businesses to keep dumpsters closed and bear-proofed (chained or locked shut).

Check please. If your dog is barking or cat is clawing at the door to get in, try to determine what has alarmed your pet. But do it cautiously, using outside lights and from a safe position, such as a porch or upstairs window.

"Bears needn't be feared, nor should they be dismissed as harmless. They simply need to be respected," Ternent said. He stressed that in the past 25 years fewer than 15 people have been injured by bears in Pennsylvania, and there are no known records of a Pennsylvania black bear killing a human.

"Black bear aggression is most often the result of a human threatening a bear, its cubs or a nearby food source, and the best reaction is to reduce that threatening appearance by leaving the area in a quiet, calm manner," Ternent said. He also advised:

Stay Calm. If you see a bear and it hasn't seen you, leave the area calmly. Talk to the

bear while moving away, to help it learn of your presence. Choose a route that will not intersect with the bear if it is moving.

Get Back. If you have surprised a bear, slowly back away while talking softly. Face the bear, but avoid direct eye contact. Do not turn and run; rapid movement may be perceived as danger to a bear that is already feeling threatened. Avoid blocking the bear's only escape route and try to move away from any cubs you see or hear. Do not attempt to climb a tree. A mother bear may falsely interpret this as an attempt to get at her cubs, even though the cubs may be in a different tree.

Pay Attention. If a bear is displaying signs of nervousness with your presence, such as pacing, swinging its head, or popping its jaws, leave the area. Some bears may bluff charge to within a few feet. If this occurs, stand your ground, wave your arms wildly, and shout at the bear. Turning and running could elicit a chase, and you cannot outrun a bear.

Fight Back. If a bear attacks, fight back as you continue to leave the area. Bears have been driven away with rocks, sticks, binoculars, car keys — even bare hands.

More information on Pennsylvania black bears is available on the Game Commission's website by looking under the "Publications" section and clicking on "Living with Pennsylvania's Black Bears"; or by clicking on the "Wildlife" section, then choosing "Wildlife Notes" and then selecting "Black Bears." □



Off the Wire

by Bob D'Angelo

KENTUCKY

A hunter from Lexington, Kentucky, harvested the first elk in that state in modern times on October 6, 2001, at the Addington Wildlife Management Area. Kentucky's elk restoration program began in 1997 when elk from Utah, Arizona, Oregon, North Dakota and Kansas were brought in. There are now approximately 1,400 elk in Kentucky.

INDIANA

A judge dismissed a case brought by the Humane Society of the United States, which was attempting to implement a controversial deer birth control program in the northern Indiana community of Beverly Shores.

BLACK-FOOTED FERRETS

More than eight dozen black-footed ferrets were freed in appropriate habitats in Colorado and Mexico as part of restoration efforts. Facing possible extinction for years, the endangered black-footed ferret is now making a comeback. The black-footed ferret, North America's only native ferret, was believed to be extinct when the last known animal died in captivity in 1979. When a colony of about 120 ferrets was later discovered in Wyoming, however, biologists were excited about a second chance to save the species. Members of this colony saved the species through captive breeding. There are currently about 700 black-footed ferrets in existence, with about half living in the wild.

WILDLIFE IMPACT

A study by Congress determined that there are 27,000 injuries a year caused by rodents; \$1 billion in damage a year caused by deer/vehicle collisions; 15 deaths a year from snake bites; 6,000 collisions between birds and airplanes; and \$70 million in annual livestock losses from predators, mainly coyotes.

SASKATCHEWAN

Conservation officers in Saskatchewan are investigating one of the most despicable violations ever encountered. In an area near Wadena, officers discovered more than 35 garbage bags containing the whole carcasses of 565 geese, 206 ducks and two sandhill cranes.

GRIZZLY BEARS

The Yellowstone Ecosystem Subcommittee, comprising the state and federal agencies managing grizzly bears and their habitat in the Yellowstone area, reports there were 42 unduplicated females with 78 cubs — a record — counted in the Yellowstone ecosystem in 2001.

WISCONSIN

There were 19 hunting-related firearm incidents, including seven fatalities, during Wisconsin's 2001 firearm deer season.

DELAWARE

There were 17 nesting pairs of bald eagles in Delaware last year — the highest number since records were kept in 1978.

Getting To Know You

IN OUR everyday life, we just touch each other's edges. Our contact is mostly polite, even apologetic when we bump elbows: "Oh excuse me . . . would you please pass . . . no, after you . . . thank you . . . do you mind?" I don't dislike this social veneer, after all, it's the stuff of civilization, and in the last half-year or so, we've all found out too much about humanity's dark side.

Hunting is one of those rare activities that reveal character. Spend time with someone in a deer camp and you'll find what that person is really about. Concentrated interaction between people challenges them to find out what's true. It strips us of facades. We can pretend only so long, and then the mask crumbles. The real "me" is exposed to all those judging eyes. The scary thing is, sometimes even we're not sure just what they'll see.

The opening day of last deer season was warm, and with both does and bucks being legal game, the group that hunts out of our home had done well. By quitting time, five deer were waiting for the trip to the butcher's. Our favorite deer processor, who makes worth-driving-for kielbasa and smoked venison ham, is 40-minutes from home. All five deer were loaded in a pickup, and I accompanied the driver to the butcher's.

When we got there, the place was waist-deep in deer. With the unseasonable temperatures, no one wanted to hang his unskinned deer overnight, for fear of spoilage. We're longtime customers and the butcher didn't want to turn us away.

"I don't have enough skinners right now," the butcher said, "but if you skin your deer, I'll take them tomorrow morning.



Linda Steiner

TWO BOWHUNTING buddies discuss where to place their stands so they cooperate, not interfere, with each other's hunt.

With the hide off, they should be fine until then."

We drove the 40 minutes back home. By then it was well after dark and our hunters had all been up since several hours before dawn. They were surprised, and would have had every right to grumble when we showed them the truck was still full of deer and told them what had happened.

"Guess we'll just skin 'em then," one said, and they did, hanging the deer in the shed, holding lights and getting it done.

What impressed me was that most of the guys who dove right into the task, flashing knives, pulling hides and getting bloody all over again, weren't even the ones who had shot the deer. I had a doe in there, as did another gal and a youngster, and I don't remember who the other deer belonged to. Of course, we offered to help skin.

"No, we'll do it," the eager skinners told us three, "you go on inside."

I was foot-dragging, eyes-not-focusing weary by that time, and hungry.

"We left some stew on the stove," someone called as I headed for the back door, "and there's biscuits." Bless them all!

The people I'm talking about have hunted with us for years; they're our core group. Their unselfishness, thoughtfulness and willingness to shoulder work that isn't theirs are why they have a standing invitation for hunting season. Most we see only once or twice a year if their work schedule allows, but we know their character and their heart. They're the kind who will skin your deer without being asked, and make it a deer camp good time.

Through the years there have been a few who have fallen out of the group, who didn't get a call to come for next hunting season. It may not have been any one thing that caused us to "forget" to invite them, just a general feeling that the way they hunted and interacted with the rest of us didn't fit. They were the type who would have stayed on the couch, feigning sleep, while the rest dove into the deer skinning. Or the kind that expect to be waited on around the camp table and leave dirty dishes for others to take to the sink. At camp, gals and guys share chores equally, and I've done my share of skinning, as well as time washing dishes.

One fellow, who is always the first to wave me off the dish washing chore ("You do enough around here"), told me he's glad to do the job, just don't tell his wife. I thought he was kidding, but when she called and I told her that her husband was elbow-deep in suds, she said, "What! He never does that at home. Let me talk to him." I guess hunting just has a way of bringing out the very best in people, even when their spouses don't expect it.

There are many tests of character in a hunting camp, some lighthearted and some serious. Dish doing, of course, falls in the former. Sportsmanship, hunting ethics and obeying game laws are the latter.

One fellow, an acquaintance of a friend,

was the only hunter to get a buck at our place one year. It was a spike, and he had come from another state with the expectation of getting a "Pennsylvania big buck." The rest of us knew that on the crowded public land we were hunting we would be lucky if any of us saw or got a shot at a legal buck. When he came in dragging the spike we were ecstatic. One for the camp! We're not skunked this year!

Instead of being happy about his kill, the man sulked. I can hardly put up with children sulking, and to see an adult pouting and whining was insufferable. I thought he was putting on an act for comic effect, but then I realized he was truly disappointed about his "bad luck" at getting a spike. He didn't react well to the ribbing he got from the others when they saw he was seriously miffed at getting a small buck. As a lark, after we took a photo of the hunter with his spike, we brought out the halves of a dropped 6-point rack we had in the garage. We snapped a photo of him holding the halves against the spike, so it looked like an 8-point. We all laughed, even him, and we sent prints of the real and fake buck photos to him later.

The end of the story was that the second photo, of him with the "8-point," was the one he put up on his locker at work and what he bragged about. He never told anyone about the spike. Childish, unsportsmanlike? In any case, that was the only year he was invited to our place to hunt, and since then even the acquaintance who brought him has lost touch with him. "Just not my kind of person," was the overall sentiment.

Deer hunting has many tests of character. When someone new joins the group, the rest of us are unconsciously sizing him up. Not that we don't have our faults, but we have passed tests like, "Will we devote the remainder of the day, in any weather, to help trail someone else's deer?" Some of our buddies have taken off work, without being asked, to help us find a deer the next day. We learned of their sacrifice only af-

ter we were shaking hands around the successful recovery.

Another revealer of character is whether a hunter will grab the free end of another's dragging stick, or insist on a turn at the end of the rope. I can't count the times when I was at the bottom a steep hollow, far from the car, with a dead deer and wondering how I'd ever get it out. Suddenly, my hunting buddies show up, take charge, and I can barely keep up following them and the deer.

Then there are all the instances when one of my group has approached me in the woods and said, "I was tired of sitting and figured I'd try to push one to you. Thought you might see something." I'm certain two

of the deer I got last year, in two states, can be credited to my friends' unselfishness, as well as their restlessness on stand.

Although hunting isn't planned as a character revelation, when we say we have "tried and true" hunting buddies, the sport has shown them to be just that. Nuances of our personality — our integrity or lack of it, our honesty or deceitfulness — can't help but come out. And why not? Hunting cuts to the bare bones of our relationship with the outdoors, with wildlife and each other. Because the activity goes back so many millennia, running through the how and why we became human, it's hardly surprising that hunting can still show us for what we really are, and aren't. □

***Fun Games* — By Connie Mertz**

Hummingbird Review

Copy the letter of each **correct** answer to see what it spells.

- ___ 1. The ruby-throated is found B) only in PA D) only near the Chesapeake Bay R) east of the Great Plains.
- ___ 2. Adults weigh U) 1/10 of an ounce C) 1 pound F) 6 ounces.
- ___ 3. Hummingbirds are attracted to W) white B) red T) purple.
- ___ 4. Their legs are primarily used for Y) perching S) walking V) sitting.
- ___ 5. Its heart beats C) 2 T) 10 F) 25 times a second when active.
- ___ 6. The hummingbird H) eats E) sings M) flies to maintain its energy.
- ___ 7. Hummingbirds use their K) skinny bills R) long tongues to get nectar.
- ___ 8. Nests are constructed of B) twigs C) feathers O) thistle and dandelion down.
- ___ 9. Hummingbirds winter in G) central America V) south Florida A) both.
- ___ 10. Enemies include I) frogs L) blue jays P) kestrels T) all three.
- ___ 11. Hummingbirds are E) territorial R) often seen in flocks.
- ___ 12. Hummers can fly D) in all directions S) only forwards and backwards.

answers on p. 63

A deer enclosure intended to provide results in a decade or so has immediately started paying dividends in terms of native plants.

Turtle Woods Wildflower Sanctuary

I NEVER should have taken my husband Bruce to see Latham's Acre. Located at SGL 30 on Dividing Ridge in southeastern McKean County, it was like stepping into a lost world, one that had been fenced to keep out deer back in 1949 by Roger Latham and Stan Forbes of the Game Commission.

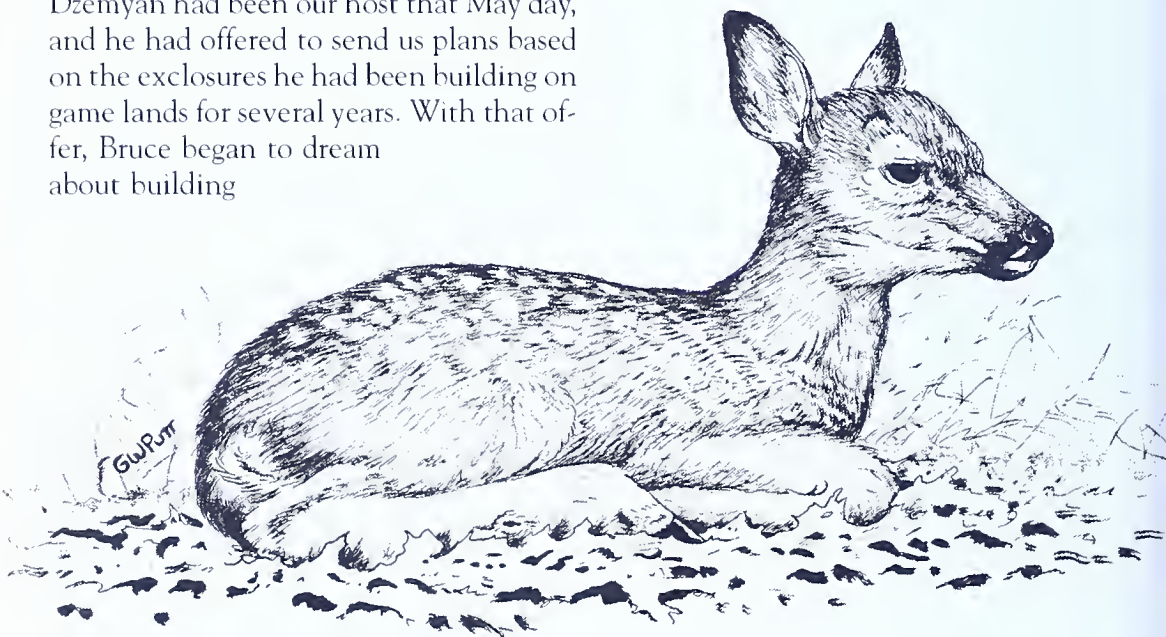
The forest floor was a mosaic of wildflowers and the understory so dense we could barely see from one end of the acre to the other.

Game Commission LMO John Dzemyan had been our host that May day, and he had offered to send us plans based on the enclosures he had been building on game lands for several years. With that offer, Bruce began to dream about building

a big enclosure on our land. By last February, he was campaigning every day for support from our son Dave and me. He had even chosen the location.

"What about the woods bounded by the Dump Trail, the Short Circuit Trail, and the First Field Trail?" he asked.

Most of this area is what I call the Magic Place because of its wildlife diversity. The lowest part, near the old farm dump, is a forested wetland that is damp through the spring and into midsummer. The largest



portion is a diverse oak/maple forest dominated by large trees, some of which date from the early and mid-19th century. The upper edge of the tract consists of a fringe of the mountain laurel/chestnut oak woods that stretches up to the ridge top.

"But that's an immense piece to fence," I protested. "How can we afford it?"

Bruce agreed that it would be expensive. The materials would cost more than \$3,000.

"Think of it as a vacation," he suggested. "Many people spend that much and more on one, and all they have when they return are memories and photos. We will have an outside laboratory for the rest of our lives."

With that argument, I was won over, and he and Dave moved ahead with measuring and ordering 123 galvanized steel posts and 3,730 feet of 48-inch-high, woven wire, mesh fencing which was needed to enclose the 2.89 acres with an 8-foot-high, 1,815-foot-long fence. Bruce also asked the help of the hunters who use our land and received enthusiastic responses from several of them.

By mid-March the posts had arrived, and Dave, with the help of the two Tims and Jeff, pounded them into the ground with a sledge hammer. These posts, usually used for highway signs, weighed four pounds per linear foot, so the work was punishing and took several days of muscle power.

Fencing Day fell on a damp, overcast April Fool's Day. Six hunters — Jeff, Troy, Troy, Jr., Andy, Tim T., and Charlie showed up, along with a neighbor, Gary, by 8 a.m. Another hunter, Paula, helped me feed the workers at lunch by providing huge vats of venison soup and home-baked pastries.

At first the work went slowly, but once everyone knew what he or she was doing, it proceeded smoothly and swiftly. Even 12-year-old Andy had his own job to do — operating the come-along throughout the day. He and Jeff, Troy, Tim and Charlie stayed until the bitter end, which turned

out to be 7:45 p.m., nearly 12 hours after they had started. But the fence was up, stretched taut, and attached securely to the posts.

There were still the three gates to design and build, a task that Jeff took on. Everyone who has visited the enclosure has been fascinated with his work, which uses counterweights and pulleys to automatically shut the light, wooden-framed, wire gates.

It was Bruce who named the enclosure. While they were building the fence across the narrow neck between the Short Circuit and First Field trails, he glanced down at Turtle Bench, tucked in the grove of large oak trees and illuminated by a sudden moment of sunlight.

Why not call the enclosure the Turtle Woods Wildflower Sanctuary? It was, after all, the wildflowers, along with the rest of the understory, that we hoped to restore. Furthermore, the eastern box turtle eats a wide variety of woodland fruits and plays an important role in dispersing seeds in northeastern forests. When some seeds, such as those from wild grapes, pass through the turtles' guts, their viability is enhanced, probably because the reptiles' digestive juices help break down the hard exteriors of the seeds, according to researchers Joanne Braun and Garrett R. Brooks. So, Turtle Woods Wildflower Sanctuary it became.

Once all the construction was finished, Bruce drew a large map of the sanctuary. Then it was up to Dave and me to fill it in with the plants that germinated throughout spring and summer. Dave first mapped the 140 largest trees, which range from 35 to 117 inches in circumference, with most in the 40- to 80-inch range. The largest are two red oaks (117 and 105 inches) and a white oak (94); the smallest are a chestnut oak (35) and a white ash (36). The other species are red maple, black and yellow birches, pignut hickory, black gum, white pine, black cherry, black oak and American elm.

With the trees mapped, we were able to add the understory wildflowers, shrubs and tree seedlings. On April 30 we did our first survey. Ranging back and forth, our eyes peeled on the ground, we felt like treasure hunters. In the wetland area we found lady's-thumb, garlic mustard, gill-over-the-ground, and rough-fruited cinquefoil, all of which are aliens that spring up in waste places. But we also discovered desirable natives in the wetland and oak/maple forest that we hoped would spread in the years to come — common blue violets, smooth yellow violets, a scattering of Solomon's seal, and a small colony of mayapples.

The shrub layer consisted of lowbush blueberry in the mountain laurel/chestnut oak zone. Striped maples and witch hazel trees dominated the middle level throughout the sanctuary. Truly a bereft area, I thought, except for the large oaks. Already I regretted the time and money that had been spent on such a pipe dream.

But as the season advanced, we kept looking. May gave us our best discoveries. On the 6th, Bruce and I found Canada mayflower leaves and a blossoming hawthorn tree surrounded by seedlings. There were also two white pine seedlings, a couple young black cherry trees, and a scattering of red maple, chestnut oak and wild azalea seedlings. The closer we looked, the more we saw. Still another wildflower, tall white lettuce, had germinated in the wetland. But the drier woods seemed empty of flowers.

Then, suddenly, Bruce asked, "What's this?"

I bent down to look at a cluster of checkered white, dark green leaves hugging the ground.

"It's downy rattlesnake plantain," I exclaimed. "An orchid!"

With that discovery, what had seemed an almost hopeless venture had become an exciting project. Maybe this would be a true wildflower sanctuary someday. Altogether, we counted 30 downy rattlesnake plantain plants. And we added it to our

list of wildflower species for the property.

Two days later Dave reported many spicebush seedlings and, in mid-May, I found pink lady's slipper leaves and one spotted wintergreen plant above Turtle Bench in the oak/maple forest. The spotted wintergreen was another new species for the property.

In June we added one Indian cucumber-root, hidden beneath the lowbush blueberries, two black cohosh plants in a bed of hay-scented ferns, five more pink lady's slippers, one hemlock seedling, many, many white snakeroot plants, teaberry, numerous clumps of Indian pipes, the beginnings of four wild yamroot vines, wild sarsaparilla, and one whorled loosestrife in blossom. We also noticed wild grape vines and Virginia creepers snaking over the ground in a corner of the wetland where before they had survived only above deer reach.

And what about the deer? Had the fence kept them out?

On June 2, as I walked down First Field Trail, I noticed a deer near the intermittent stream that ran under the sanctuary fence. Although the deer bounded off, I wondered if it was possible for a fawn to be inside. Unlike most enclosure fences, Bruce had turned ours upside down so that all the largest spaces were closest to the ground. This, he hoped, would enable the smaller creatures, such as chipmunks, squirrels, raccoons, porcupines, foxes, and woodchucks, to move in and out of the sanctuary.

Shortly after 3 p.m., Tim T. appeared with his wife Sherry and reported that a deer had been in the sanctuary. They had tried to get it out through the lower gate, but it had thrown itself repeatedly against the fence in several places and had somehow escaped. I suggested that it was a doe and that she had a fawn inside.

While we discussed the situation, Dave went up to check the deer damage to the fence. He quickly returned to tell us that there was a fawn inside. We rushed up to

the sanctuary and, following Dave's lead, found the fawn lying in the bed of hay-scented ferns just below the streambed.

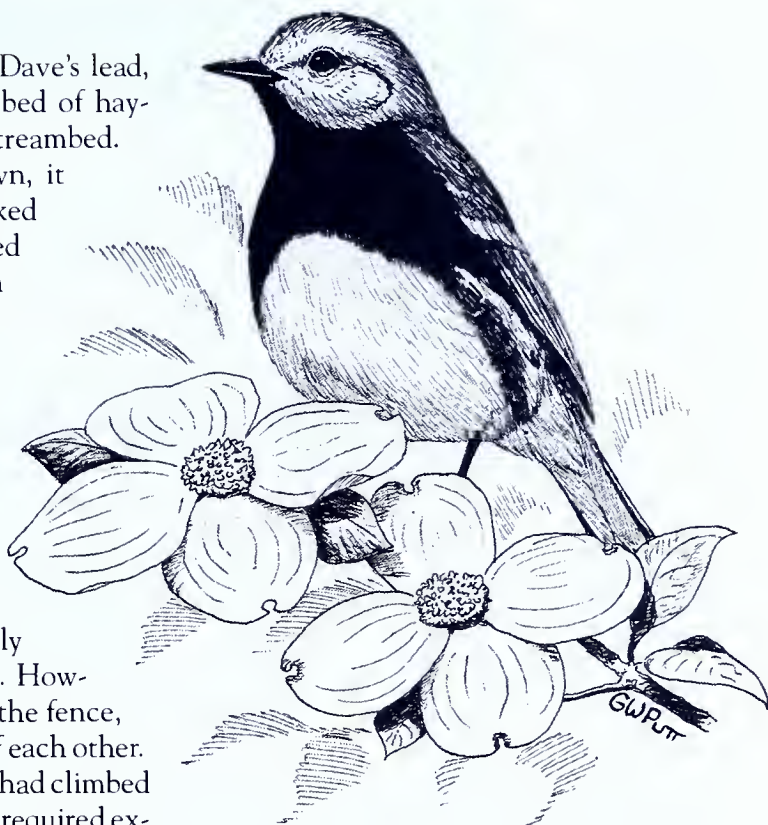
As we surrounded the fawn, it suddenly leaped to its feet, tucked back its legs, and literally sailed through a four-inch square in the middle of the fence. If we hadn't seen it for ourselves, we never would have believed it.

Bruce and Dave immediately repaired the corner of the fence where the doe had pushed apart and even broken a few of the wires. But that, it turned out, was the only time deer breached our fence. However, three times trees fell on the fence, two of them within five days of each other. And once it looked as if a bear had climbed over it. All of these incursions required extensive repairs, and by the end of the season it was slightly bent in places but intact.

In July we added clearweed, enchanter's nightshade, yellow wood sorrel, horsebalm, and Pennsylvania smartweed, mostly in the wetland, to our wildflower list and in August we found an Indian tobacco by First Field gate, a couple of sharp-leaved goldenrods, many white wood asters, and a maze of arrow-leaved tear-thumb in the wetland. By then the wetland had taken on the look of a tangled thicket.

That was also when we noticed the pounds and pounds of wild mushrooms growing inside the sanctuary — enormous yellow and pink specimens of *Boletus bicolor*, as well as *Amanita gemmata* and *Russula emetica*, and two coral mushroom species — *Clavicornia pyxicata* and *Clavulina cristata* — and many more species I couldn't identify. Although there were also mushrooms outside the sanctuary, they were neither as plentiful nor as large.

The birds, too, were abundant, and throughout spring and summer, I sat on



Turtle Bench listening to the songs and calls of Acadian flycatchers, wood thrushes, red-eyed vireos, scarlet tanagers, ovenbirds, eastern wood pewees, blue-headed vireos, pileated woodpeckers and black-throated green warblers. I wondered how many of them had nested in the sanctuary. The previous year a red-eyed vireo had built her nest directly over Turtle Bench, and the Acadian flycatchers and wood thrushes had always favored the Magic Place.

Reptiles and amphibians also put in appearances — a small eastern milk snake, several American toads, a wood frog and, of course, eastern box turtles.

We covered every inch of that sanctuary many times, walking slowly, our heads down, (the botanist's walk, I called it), looking for plants, and we found far more than I expected. Turtle Woods Wildflower Sanctuary was to be my old-age research area in a decade or so. But already it is providing me with exciting discoveries and renewed appreciation for what even a small plot of forest contains. □

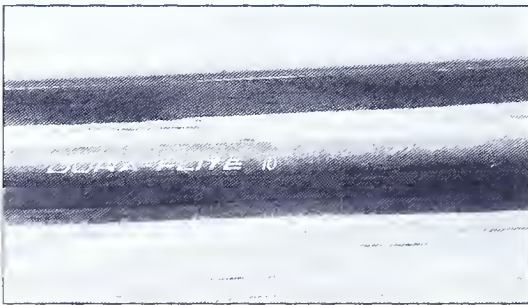
Straight from the Bowstring

By Mike Raykovicz

Considering no component of a bowhunter's tackle may affect success more than arrows, skimping on them just doesn't make sense.

Arrow Selection

SERIOUS ARCHERS know the importance of shooting top quality arrows. Hunters, 3-D shooters and field archers realize full well that no component of their archery tackle affects their success as much as their arrows. Manufacturers are aware of this, too, and today offer a wide variety of shafts that meets the need of the most discriminating shooter. Today, archers have a choice of aluminum, carbon, or even a combination of aluminum and carbon for arrow material. But, it wasn't always so.



MICRO-FLITE and Dura-Flite fiberglass arrows were state-of-the-art in the 1960s.

I bought my first set of arrows in the 1950s, with money I made caddying at a local golf course. I paid one dollar for three white, feather fletched, wooden arrows that as far as I was concerned, were state-of-the art. I didn't worry about arrow length, spine, or nock alignment because at the time, I had no conception of their importance for accurate arrow flight. The deer herd was safe, because as a teenager, I only occasionally hunted with a bow and arrow. It wasn't until after I graduated from

college and had my first real job that I was able to afford better tackle. In 1964, I acquired my first Browning recurve and a dozen Micro-Flite arrows.

The Micro-Flite arrows were constructed from a resin coated fiberglass and were fitted with cone shaped aluminum inserts to which the broadhead and nock were glued. The broadhead was attached to the arrow with ferrule cement and the nock glued on with Duco Cement. The arrows sported a white crest, and were fletched with high-grade turkey feathers. They were really good looking arrows and, short of the more expensive and less available aluminum arrows, the best the market had to offer.

As good looking as the arrows were, by today's standards they had serious shortcomings. The arrows were heavy, varied in weight from shaft to shaft, and were not really straight. When shot from a recurve bow, their rainbow-like trajectory was a far cry from what modern archers expect from even inexpensive tackle. The fiberglass material they were constructed of was not exceptionally durable either. The tip end often shattered after only a few dozen shots into a good grass mat target. As a result of this inherent flaw, I lost a beautiful 8-point buck when, after hitting the deer, the arrow splintered like a peeled banana. I searched for that animal for two days to no avail, finally realizing there had to be a better material for arrows. There was.

Aluminum has been used as an arrow

material for decades, but it wasn't until the 1970s, when bow hunting began to really grow, that serious bowhunters joined field and target archers in accepting aluminum shafts as the universal standard. Aluminum arrows are strong, relatively economical, and come in a wide range of specifically matched spine-weights. Easton's XX75 GameGetter II arrows have a tensile strength of 96,000 psi and a straightness factor of plus or minus .003 of an inch. The XX75 Camo GameGetter arrow shaft is made with an exceptionally strong 7075 T9 alloy and a straightness factor of plus or minus .002 of an inch. Easton's XX78 Super Slam and Super Slam Select arrows are even more durable. These shafts are constructed from a 7178 T9 alloy with a tensile strength of 100,000 psi.

According to Easton's "Arrow Tuning and Maintenance Guide," Easton's arrow shafts are produced from extremely high strength aluminum alloys, either 7178 or 7075. The shafts are cold drawn over and over from an aluminum tube that has been fusion bonded from precision coil stock. The coil stock is of uniform thickness and is drawn many times. It is then thermally treated to ensure a precise uniform arrow spine. To further ensure shaft integrity, Easton puts each one through an "eddy current tester" that checks the wall thickness. Any shaft with a material imperfection or flaw is rejected.

Easton states that arrow spine is controlled by the wall thickness and outside diameter of the shaft. These numbers are then used to code each arrow shaft and are printed on the outside of the shaft. For example, I shoot a 70-pound Hoyt Havoc bow with 2315 Super Slam arrows. The first two numbers, 23, is the shaft diameter rounded to the nearest sixty-fourth of an inch. The second two numbers is the thickness of the arrow shaft wall measured to the closest one thousand of an inch. My arrows then, are 23/64 of an inch in diameter, and have a wall thickness of .015 of an inch.

Because Easton offers more than 60 different arrow shafts, hunters can fine tune their arrow selection by choosing the lightest possible arrow with adequate stiffness to provide accurate arrow flight. If an arrow is too heavy, the archer is giving up valuable speed. If the arrow selected is too light for the poundage of the bow, the shaft will flex when shot, leading to erratic arrow flight. In addition, shooting too light an arrow could possibly damage the limbs of an expensive compound bow.

To help archers select the proper aluminum shaft for their bow weight and draw length, Easton publishes a free and readily available chart that allows hunters to select the proper arrow spine for their particular bow configuration. The chart really helps a shooter pick the right shaft because it considers the length of the shaft, weight of the broadhead, peak bow weight, and whether the bow is equipped with cams or wheels.

To aid in arrow tuning and to maximize vane clearance with bow cables and risers, Easton developed the Universal Nock Insert, or UNI system, for nock alignment. This system allows the archer to rotate the nock for perfect fletching clearance. The UNI bushing fits into the end of the arrow, and a nock, specially designed to fit inside the UNI bushing, is fitted inside the shaft. This system has greatly enhanced accurate arrow flight by allowing the archer to adjust the position of the arrow on the rest so that the fletching clears the bow's riser and cables. In addition, Easton aluminum shafts are offered in four different weight groups: Ultralite, Superlite, Lite, and Standard. Each weight group offers shaft sizes to match nearly any bow weight and arrow length combination.

Aluminum arrows have accounted for the demise of more deer than any other material but, as good a material as aluminum is as an arrow component, a new material is making inroads into the market. Carbon arrows are gaining in popularity because they are extremely durable, re-

markably consistent in weight, and are extremely straight. Add to those facts that the larger carbon shafts with inserts are much easier to tune than their recent predecessors and it's easy to see why so many archers are switching from aluminum to carbon.

Dana Bracklins is Pro-Staff Director at Game Tracker arrows, a leading company in the manufacture of graphite arrows. According to Bracklins, a form of carbon arrow has been around since the late 1970s. The real revolution in carbon as an arrow material came in the mid-1980s, when a thin shaft, archers called a "soda straw," was put on the market. There was little doubt archers achieved significantly more arrow speed from the new graphite shaft compared to aluminum, but removing the shafts from 3-D or other foam targets was often difficult. Their blazing speed caused the plastic material in the target to melt from the friction of entry, thereby fusing the arrow to the target. Although this trait was annoying, the thin arrows had other drawbacks as well.

According to Bracklins, the early tiny diameter carbon shafts, manufactured by what the industry called a "Pultrusion" process, were often difficult to tune. Too thin to have internal components for attaching the nock and broadhead, they came with what the industry called "outserts," external components that fit awkwardly on the outside of the shaft. In addition, release shooters found these thin shafts presented fletching clearance problems when shot through certain types of shoot-through arrow rests. As a result, shooters didn't like the technology, so acceptance of the early carbon shafts was slow.

Shafts are still manufactured by the pultrusion process. "Pultruded" shafts are constructed with the fiber filaments running longitudinally along the shaft. Today, most top-of-the-line carbon shafts are constructed with a radial or wrap-around construction and offer at least medium diam-



A "PULTRUDED" carbon arrow is thin compared to an aluminum arrow with the same spine.

eters for easier tuning. In addition, the graphite arrows available to archers today offer internal components (nock and broadhead inserts) and are incredibly straight. Some shafts boast a straightness tolerance of .002 of an inch or less.

According to Bracklins, Game Tracker came into the carbon market with their AFC shaft in the early 1990s. The AFC shaft was a wrapped carbon shaft which, like its predecessors, was light in weight, durable and, more importantly, large enough in diameter so that the gap on shoot-through arrow rests was wide enough for good fletching clearance.

In manufacturing top-of-the-line carbon arrows, the carbon fibers are wrapped in different directions much like the way a radial tire is made. This multi-layer, crossweave construction technique results in an extremely strong product that is much more durable than aluminum arrows or carbon arrows of lesser quality.

Like the manufacturers of aluminum arrows, manufacturers of carbon arrows pay strict attention to quality control. According to Bracklins, top-of-the-line carbon arrow shafts are laser checked for straightness and then individually weighed. The shafts that pass the straightness test of plus or minus .001 inch are then individually weighed so that the total variation in weight is plus or minus two grains per dozen arrows. The result is an arrow that is better than the shooter himself. When shot from a mechanical release, these arrows will often shoot into

the same hole at 20 yards. According to John Shepley, Marketing Director at Precision Shooting Equipment, PSE offers the same close tolerances in their Competition Pro line of graphite arrows as well.

Because carbon arrows are lighter than aluminum they fly faster. More speed means less drop over a given distance and, as a result, some hunters use only one sight pin for distances normally encountered when hunting. Consider the fact most poor shots at deer are either high or low, not left or right, the faster speed offered by carbon arrows means slight miscalculations in range estimation are less critical when hunting.

Speed, however, isn't everything. Lighter arrows mean less kinetic energy, and some archers have complained about incomplete penetration when deer were struck with a carbon arrow. The heavier aluminum arrows have more kinetic energy, which makes them more likely to pass completely through a deer. For that reason, some archers who switched from aluminum to carbon arrows found themselves switching back. However, some take issue with that statement, and Dana Bracklins is one of them.

According to Bracklins, all arrows bend and oscillate after being shot from a bow. High-speed photography shows that aluminum arrows are still oscillating far downrange while carbon arrows stabilize only a few yards from the bow. This characteristic of less oscillation increases penetration because the shaft enters the target

straighter, thus transferring more energy to the target.

In addition, Bracklins pointed out that downrange flight of a carbon arrow is better because the lack of oscillation means less energy is lost and the arrow retains greater energy downrange. This argument could go on forever, with proponents of carbon and aluminum extolling the virtues of each. What it comes down to is the preference and budget of the individual archer.

Because oscillation dampens quickly in carbon shafts, they are offered in far fewer spine weights than are aluminum arrows. This means a newcomer to the sport of archery may be able to buy a new bow and still use the same carbon arrows he used before. For example, the Beman ICS Hunter, PSE's Carbon Force, and Game Tracker's Carbon Express arrow shafts come in only four shaft sizes that covers all draw weights. The exception to this, according to Jay Barrs, Easton's Branch manager, are the Easton A/C/C composite shafts. These shafts come in 15 sizes that accommodate the needs of target and field archers as well as some selective hunters.

A big selling point for carbon arrows is that they are extremely durable and thus "cheaper" to own and use. An aluminum arrow can bend, rendering it useless. Carbon arrows won't bend like aluminum, but they are not indestructible, either. Shooting tight groups can damage a carbon shaft. A carbon arrow can be damaged by another arrow hitting it from the side: Therefore, it is important to inspect carbon arrows after every shot. A carbon arrow is either straight or it is broken.

To check the integrity of a carbon shaft, grip the shaft at the point and fletching ends and twist the shaft slightly in opposite directions. If the arrow twists, it is damaged and should be discarded. Another way



NEWER carbon arrows are larger in diameter and have internal components compared to the "outserts" used on earlier "pultruded" carbon shafts.

to check the integrity of a carbon shaft is to grasp the shaft at each end and gently flex the shaft. If it is broken, the flexing should make the problem obvious.

Make no mistake. High quality carbon arrows like high quality aluminum arrows are expensive. I recently paid almost \$80 for a dozen XX75 Super Slam aluminum arrows and top-of-the-line carbon arrows can cost even more. A dozen aluminum/carbon composite arrows favored by some hunters, but mostly by 3-D and target shooters, retails for approximately \$150. Considering no component of a hunter's tackle may affect success more than arrows, skimping on them is, in my opinion, frivolous economy.

Just as the so-called "Pultrusion" process for shaft manufacturing has taken a

back seat to the new radially wrapped technology, and the now old fashioned "outserts" have given way to a recently developed internal component system for broadhead and nock attachment, arrow manufactures are constantly looking for new ways to improve their products.

Archers today are fortunate to be able to select a shaft material, either aluminum, carbon, or an aluminum/carbon composite, such as Easton's A/C/C or Beman's Carbon Metal Matrix arrows, within their price range and be assured the arrows will be straighter and more durable than they were a just few years ago. Regardless of the arrow material you choose, be sure to consult the latest arrow spine chart to be certain the arrows match your draw length, bow weight and cam configuration. □

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The Shooters' Corner

By Don Lewis

A varmint is any pest-type animal, which includes crows, coyotes, foxes and chucks. With such a wide variety of targets, it should be obvious that just one cartridge will not satisfy all varmint hunters.

Varmint Rifles

I SPOTTED another hunter several hundred yards on the opposite side of the lane when I parked my car. It was a big farm, however, with a half dozen large hayfields, so there was plenty of room for several hunters. The field I chose was bordered by a woods that had plenty of chuck dens. I was using a .22 rimfire, so I had to get within 50 yards of the woods.

While I was setting up behind a battered bale of hay to use for a rest, a shot rang out, and it sure wasn't a .22 rimfire. Several minutes later a second shot rang out and then a third. I figured the fellow was using a .22 Hornet, which was a popular chuck cartridge in the 1930s and '40s.

As I was wondering what cartridge the

hunter was using, a chuck came out of the woods. The grass was thick at the edge of the woods, and the evening sun made using open sights difficult. My bullet sailed over the chuck, and it stood upright and then slowly ambled into the woods. Ten minutes later I was still intent on watching for the chuck to emerge when a voice from behind startled me.

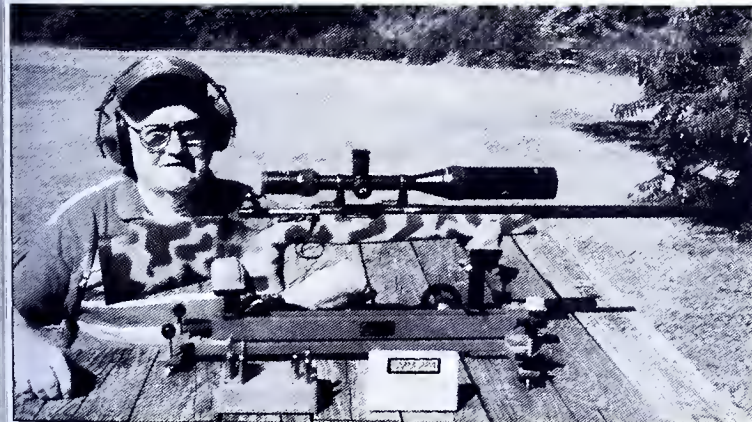
"I see you miss, too," the older hunter said with a smile. "I'm calling it quits; missed three shots at less than 275 yards."

His statement about the distance made me squirm a little, because the shot I had missed was around 40 yards. I wondered what cartridge would be accurate out to nearly 300. It was then I noticed he had a

lever action Savage with a scope, and I thought I knew the answer.

DON LEWIS testing a top-notch varmint rig — a 6mm-.284 built on a Remington 700 short action stocked with an H-S Precision fiberglass stock. Note the National Match Rifle Support Model 2 rest. The scope is a Docter Optic 8-25x.

Helen Lewis



"That rifle really cracks," I said. "What caliber are you using?"

I expected him to say he had a .300 Savage, but when he said he was using a Savage .22 Hi-Power, I asked to see a cartridge.

Well, for the next 20 minutes, we discussed woodchuck cartridges. He said he had been groundhog hunting for 30 years, and listed the various varmint rifles he had owned. There was no question he had a lot of experience. I'm not certain, but I think that was the first time I had really examined the .22 Hi-Power. It was a potent looking cartridge compared to the .22 Long Rifle cartridge I had. It was obvious the .22 rimfire was not suited for long range chuck shooting. He left, and when storm clouds began to swirl above me, I called it quits, too. I left empty-handed as far as chucks were concerned, but the seed was planted: I needed a genuine varmint rig.

The first real "chuck rifle" I purchased, in 1949, was a Model 43 Winchester chambered for the .22 Hornet.

What is the best varmint cartridge? I define "varmint" as being any pest-type animal. That includes crows, coyotes, foxes and chucks east of the Mississippi River, and prairie dogs, ground squirrels and a variety of hole diggers west of the big river. With such a wide variety of targets, it should be obvious that just one cartridge will not satisfy all varmint hunters. On the other hand, one fellow told me he simply bought a 7mm Remington Magnum, which for him filled the bill for everything from big game to chuck hunting.

Twenty or more years ago I came up with what seemed a reasonable solution to the best varmint cartridge dilemma. I settled for just two rifles for chuck hunting. One would be a .220 Swift heavy barrel built on a 98 Mauser action, and the other was a factory Winchester Model 70A chambered for the 7mm Remington Magnum. The Swift would be used up to 300 yards, and the 7mm Mag would handle the extra long shots. While this combination

of cartridges will actually handle most varmint shots, I overlooked some important ingredients inherent to varmint hunting.

My first realization that I hadn't quite settled my dilemma hit me like a brick when a landowner gave me permission to hunt as long as I used something that didn't crack like an artillery gun. He even suggested that I use a .25-20 or no more than a .22 Hornet. It struck me that I might have to add a third caliber rifle, but I knew it wouldn't be long until I would have to add a fourth, fifth, six and so on. It seemed I was right back to square one.

I have to admit that Helen and I used the .220 Swift/7mm Mag combination with good results for several summers. Still, I had to admit that every varmint cartridge on the market had a place in the varmint-shooting realm. The fellow who used a 7mm Magnum for all types of varmint and big game hunting really didn't have the answer, and my idea of using only two vastly different cartridges for chuck shooting was certainly not a panacea for all situations.

Determining what is the best varmint cartridge is like judging a beauty queen. No matter which lady is chosen, there are others who would have picked someone else. When selecting a varmint rig, however, there are some guidelines that should be considered. There's no question that the Remington .22-250 is an outstanding varmint cartridge for shots out to 350 yards. One friend thinks his .218 Bee is superior to all others, while another sticks with a Savage 340 chambered for the .22 Hornet. It's topped with just an ordinary .22 rimfire scope, but up to 150 yards, the gentleman was just fine. In fact, if any chuck he killed was not hit in the neck or head, he considered it a miss. One summer he told me that he had taken 26 chucks with 27 shots. I didn't bother to give him my score.

Too many varmint hunters judge good shooting by distance to the target, not bullet placement. I've had hunters tell me that

they, or someone they know, have made kills at 500, 700, 1,000 or 2,000 yards. I don't dispute these figures, but I don't put much stock in just going for distance. I have no idea what my longest shot was, but Helen and I made kills across a wide ravine that our hunting guide thought was about 600 yards. I shot two or three times at my chuck before nailing it, while, as usual, Helen fired just once at a chuck about 20 yards farther up the hillside. We were using a .25 Neidner Improved (the original .25 Neidner was the forerunner of the Remington .25-06).

Wildcat cartridges, especially those with "improved" cases, automatically give the impression they generate higher velocities and more power. To some extent, that is true, but altering a case in any manner can cause chamber pressure problems. Never start with maximum powder charges, no matter where they come from. Always reduce the first powder charges by at least 15 percent of any of the suggested powder charges. After firing, check the case thoroughly for signs of chamber pressure, such as cratered primers, loose primers or case splits. This is doubly true if the bolt handle is hard to lift and the empty case difficult to extract.

It should be evident by now that selecting the right varmint cartridge is a personal matter. Basically, it depends on how each of us hunt. With more than 65 years of chuck hunting behind me, I am not a "long distance" shooter. For years, I had two shooting ranges that allowed me to shoot at 100, 200 and 300 yards from solid in-ground benches. Yet despite what could be considered a perfect set up, it took me two summers before I could shoot, with consistency, one-inch groups at 200 yards, and it was a rare occasion when I kept five shots in less than 1 3/8 inches at 300 yards. This clearly demonstrated to me that making consistent fatal hits at distances much beyond 450 yards would tax my shooting skills even under perfect weather conditions. As far as having a spotter call the

shots reminds me of watching an artillery outfit blow up a building several miles distant. A small plane circled high above the building, radioing where the rounds hit. For more than a minute, round after round hit in front, in back and on both sides. Eventually, a round scored and the building disintegrated. To me, however, when it comes to hunting, that is not precision shooting.

I'm not being demeaning. I've fired many rounds at distant chucks while a hunting buddy helped guide me on target, but that's not my way of hunting. A chuck hunting friend told me he could hit a mouse at a half mile if someone paid for his ammo. That sounds like a rather expensive undertaking. Unquestionably, it's an exaggerated statement, but it helps make my point that varmint hunting is not necessarily super long range shooting. Just because you haven't killed a chuck at 750 yards doesn't mean you are not a dedicated and well-qualified varmint hunter. On the other hand, if you consistently make kills at distances your hunting terrain offers, what more should be expected? You are a successful and an experienced chuck hunter.

I do believe a chuck hunter is better off with a heavy barrel, but the cartridge selection is not for me to say. I'm looking forward to nailing a few chucks out to 250 yards with my .19 Calhoun wildcat rig that is built on a BRNO bolt action and topped with a 4-14x Springfield Armory Government Tactical scope. The little .19 Calhoun is a .22 Hornet case necked down to 19-caliber and fire-formed to a straight wall case with a sharp 30-degree shoulder angle. Muzzle velocity with a 32-grain Calhoun bullet is 3,305 fps. It's a tack driver, too. □

Fun Game answers:

R, U, B, Y, T, H, R, O, A, T, E, D
RUBY-THROATED.

I SWORE that when my old spaniel died I would not write yet another teary tribute from a hunter to his dog. Rather, I'd describe who Jenny was, and what she did, and let the reader judge how much she meant to me.

I bought her in 1986. A typical springer, she was intelligent, merry and affectionate. She came into my life at a time when I could give her lots of attention. She was in her prime during a stretch of years when ruffed grouse — my favorite quarry — were plentiful. She taught herself how to hunt grouse, and she taught me how to hunt behind a dog.

A springer spaniel is a flushing dog: When it smells hot bird scent, it charges in on the game and puts it to flight. The strategy works on pheasants, woodcock and grouse. With Jenny's help, I bagged many birds. Jenny was a sure retriever. She would swim into beaver ponds and flowing creeks to fetch wood ducks and mallards I'd brought down; she recovered wounded ducks that had hidden in the fecund, scent-filled environment.

"Rough-shooting" is a British term for hunting a variety of game — whatever offers itself during the course of a hunt. Jenny was a master at it. I even wrote a book about our shared days afield, entitling it *A Rough-Shooting Dog*.

We hunted grouse more than any other game. Over the years, Jenny taught herself to go slowly and quietly — to flow through the cover, checking out blowdowns and grape tangles, moving like a fox until she picked up scent. The flushing grouse, intent on escaping the dog, sometimes offered a shot.

One particular hunt comes to mind, on the final day of the 1996 late season. On the edge of a hazel patch, 10-year-old Jenny showed scent, her tail going from double- to triple-time. She dived into the cover. The bird powered out low, and when I swept the gun up and pulled the trigger, the grouse flinched but went flailing onward.

Thank goodness for Jenny's educated nose and her ability to mark, which had remained undiminished despite her clouded eyes. There was no snow on the mountain; I followed Jenny until she struck scent. She carried the trail to a drift of leaves against a log. There she dug out the grouse and gave it to me.

For me, the fetching back of game is the most beautiful and elemental aspect of the hunt. It is burned into my memory, happening as it did so many times: Jenny emerging from the brush with a bird in her jaws, her ears cupped back, her tail wagging slowly, her eyes on mine.

We had other hunts together after that, but they became fewer, and shorter, and finally ceased after Jenny became deaf. Plus I had a new spaniel to train and introduce to the uplands.

Jenny had had her share of the birds. When I laid my friend in her grave, I placed the tail fans of two grouse on her winding sheet. Yes, I grieved. But what, really, could I be sad about?

Nothing, save perhaps the inexorable passage of time.

Jenny



Chuck Fergus

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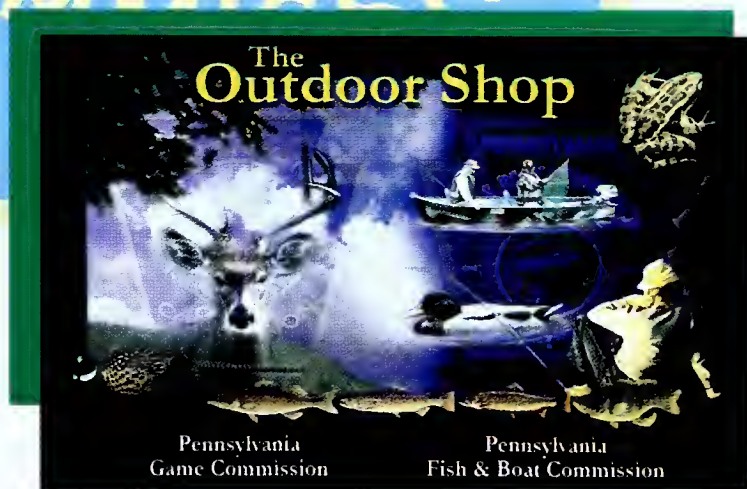
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By Stephen Leed

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Antler Restrictions

THEY'VE BEEN talked about and argued over for more than two years; and now they're here. Antler restrictions more stringent than at any other time in the agency's history have been enacted for the upcoming deer seasons. Details begin on page 35. Two major changes over what was proposed at the January meeting are that junior hunters, hunters with a permit to use a vehicle as a blind, and active duty U.S. Armed Services personnel are allowed to shoot antlered deer that qualified under the old antler restrictions, as are all hunters in Special Regulations counties. Otherwise, to be legal, an antlered deer must have at least three points to a side or, in 10 western counties, four points to a side.

These new restrictions are not about trophy hunting. They've been enacted to help establish more natural age and sex ratios in the deer herd. That Pennsylvania kills a higher percentage of bucks (up to 90 percent in some areas) than any other state should be all the justification anybody needs to give these a chance.

Antler restrictions, though, are just one facet of an overall program designed to balance deer numbers with what the habitat can support. The October antlerless deer seasons and the concurrent antlered and antlerless regular firearms seasons are also designed to get better control of the deer population.

Those seasons seem to be popular, too. Last year, many hunters weren't able to get antlerless licenses in the counties they wanted because they put off applying. Evidently, the concurrent season — and, perhaps, the October seasons, too — appealed to many hunters who otherwise wouldn't have bought antlerless licenses. Even though the allocation is high this year, to compensate for the 85,000 antlered deer expected to be protected by the new antler restrictions, hunters would be wise to follow application deadlines and get their applications in as soon as possible.

Related to the changes in deer hunting are some of the most ambitious deer research projects done anywhere. Causes of fawn mortality study, the relationship between age and antler size, productivity and breeding dates, and the movements and behavior of deer and hunters are all being studied.

Finally, over the course of the next year or so, you can expect to hear about new deer management units, a new deer population monitoring system and, among other things, a new program to help private landowners with severe deer problems. You can also expect to see more deer management coverage in the news, on our website, and in *Game News*, as the agency continues to keep everybody up to date with what's going on and where we're going.

It's hard to think of a more contentious issue in the history of the Game Commission. For almost 50 years, a 3-inch spike or two points to a side has defined a legal Pennsylvania buck. Raising such an ingrained standard is hard for just about everyone to accept. It's all most of us have ever known. Hunters, however, are the key to any deer management program. This year, give the new antler restrictions a chance. — *Bob Mitchell*

letters

Editor:

In the April issue a woman asked if any other hunters have shot five bears in Pennsylvania. I've taken bears in 1979, 1982, 1983, 1989, 1995, 2000 and 2001. Except for 1983, the bears allowed me to carry the "Triple Play" title, as I also got a deer and turkey in those years. All but one of the bears was taken on state land. Sure, I've been lucky, but last year, for example, I hunted or scouted more than 100 days.

S. KERCHNER
BERNVILLE

Editor:

I'm a bit confused. Are junior hunters allowed to use their regular license "buck" tag to take a doe?

R. ADAMS
SHAMOKIN

No. Junior hunters may not use their regular license "buck" tag to take an antlerless deer. The commission had proposed this, though, at the January meeting. But at the April meeting, when the upcoming seasons and bag limits were approved, this provision was not approved. Therefore, junior license holders must have a valid antlerless deer license to take an antlerless deer, just like all other hunters.

Editor:

Since 1976 the Game Commission has held a hunter education course at the Decatur Sportsmans Club in Mifflin County. We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to all the outstanding volunteer instructors who have given up their time and

knowledge to Pennsylvania's new hunters. Your tireless dedication is appreciated.

C. HAMILTON
McCLURE

Editor:

To increase the number of harvest report cards returned by hunters, I think every hunter should turn in a report card, whether or not they harvested a deer. Then, these could be entered into a drawing for a bull elk license. A better reporting rate, I suspect, will become more important as Pennsylvania moves into its new antler restriction approach, and this would be useful for turkey management, too.

N. MOSS
GREENVILLE

Editor:

In a turkey hunting story you ran, I was surprised to read that the hunter got to his hunting spot, loaded his gun, and headed off into the dark woods. I think he should have put the chain of events in a better, more safe order. Walking through the woods in the dark with a loaded gun is dangerous.

B. JAKUPOWSKI
ALPHA, NJ

Editor:

Enjoyed Scott Weidensaul's "Crossing" column in the April issue. I have entertained similar thoughts for a long time.

Perhaps if we got rid of the many gizmos and gadgets, we could actually begin to experience far greater enjoyment and fulfillment in a "simplified" outdoor experience. But then people would have to spend more time and effort (rather than money) to better understand the natural environment. Of course, less dependence on technology may threaten to enrich our daily lives as well.

D. PRESCOTT
BOILING SPRINGS

Editor:

After more than 50 years of hunting I had my most unusual experience during last year's archery season. I was on my way to my treestand when a hawk swooped down and took my hat right off my head. He then flew about 50 yards, dropped it, and flew up into a tree and watched me. From now on when I'm archery hunting, I think I'll be spending more time watching the trees above me, rather than what's on the ground below.

D. HOLLAND
MORGANTOWN

Many letters were received about antler restrictions. Some writers favored them, others didn't. None are printed here because the issue was settled when the Commission enacted new antler restrictions for the upcoming deer seasons. See page 35 for complete details.

Your comments are welcome. Mail them to "Letters," 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Letters will be edited for brevity and clarity.

Bowhunting Grassland Grizzlies

By Derek Stoner

THROUGHOUT elementary school I anxiously awaited Groundhog Day. Every year on February 2, I would proudly march into my classroom for show-and-tell and reveal the contents of a well-worn cardboard box. "Mr. G" was a groundhog that my father had shot on the family farm with his bow, and Dad and my uncle had done the taxidermy work on it. Miraculously, it has survived the decades of inquisitive hands stroking its thinning pelt. To me, Mr. G was a source of great amazement, and I vowed that one day I would get a groundhog with my bow.

Groundhogs have several

names, woodchucks and whistle pigs, for example, but I affectionately refer to them as grassland grizzlies, as their stocky build and brown fur creates the appearance of a small grizzly bear.

I've learned quite a bit about bowhunting these rodents over the years. Our family farm hosts an abundant population of groundhogs, and they feed heavily



in the alfalfa and soybean fields. My first efforts to stalk within range of these feeding chucks, however, proved futile. I quickly found out that getting within bow range was a difficult proposition at best. Many times I crept within 40 yards of one, only to have it spot me and then turn tail and run back down into its burrow. But eventually, I found a surefire way to get within bow range of a woodchuck. Almost without fail, a chuck that senses danger will retreat to the safety of its burrow. However, they usually reemerge after 10 to 15 minutes. Their grizzled brown heads will peek out of the hole to scan their surroundings, and when they think the coast is clear, they'll waddle out and begin to feed again. This is the time to meet them with your bow and arrow in hand.

The first time I tried this technique it worked. I had scared a chuck into its hole in the middle of our horse pasture, but a short while later it popped out to look around. I lay 20 yards from the hole, on my stomach, my bow propped in front of me. As it began moving away from me, I rose to my knees, drew the bow and released the arrow. My arrow passed through behind its shoulders. I raced over to inspect my trophy, and was amazed at its size. Verification on our bathroom scale (without my mother's knowledge, of course) revealed it weighed 13 pounds. I had finally taken a grassland grizzly with my bow, and a trophy specimen at that.

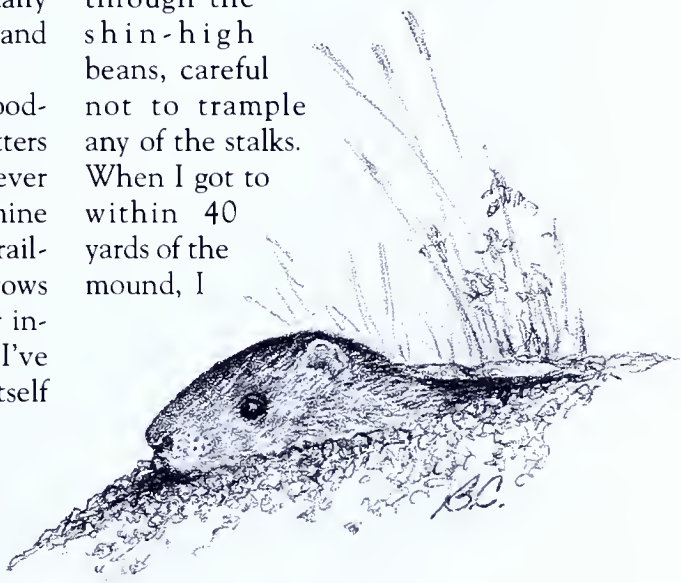
Since then I have expanded my woodchuck bowhunting horizons. These critters can be found in some places you'd never expect. A favorite summer hunt of mine involves a leisurely walk along an old railroad bed. I watch for groundhog burrows along the side hills and wait for their inhabitants to come out, and frequently I've surprised a chuck as it was sunning itself on the rocky banks.

A couple years ago I encountered a groundhog that was perched on top of a large brushpile. It apparently had a hideout beneath all the de-

bris, and liked to use the top of the brushpile as its lookout. I stalked within 30 yards as it peered in the opposite direction, and my broadhead-tipped arrow sent it tumbling off its perch. I discovered that a family of chucks was using the brushpile.

Last summer I matched wits with a wily old chuck living in the middle of a soybean field. I spotted it from the road and pulled up to the farmhouse to ask permission to hunt. The old farmer looked at me kind of funny when I asked to bowhunt for groundhogs. "Son," he said, "I don't know how you're gonna shoot that old chuck with a stick and string, but be my guest. I've tried getting him with my .22, but he always spots me before I can get a shot."

The next day I arrived at the field an hour before sunset. With bow in hand I made my way towards the burrow. There was a noticeable pile of dirt around the hole, reminiscent of a baseball pitcher's mound. All of the beans within a large radius had been cropped to the ground by the ravenous chuck. Clad in full camouflage and an orange cap for safety, I carefully stalked towards the hole. My legs moved slowly through the shin-high beans, careful not to trample any of the stalks. When I got to within 40 yards of the mound, I



dropped to my knees.

Twenty minutes later a grayish-brown head popped up out of the entrance hole, and then the rest of the large chuck's body emerged from its lair. The chuck rose up on its hind legs and scanned the countryside in a classic pose, and then dropped down on all fours and began to feed towards me. My heart was beating wildly as I tried to crouch lower in the beans. The chuck seemed extremely alert and would frequently raise its head to scout for danger, but it was within range. Just then the farmer's dog started barking, and the chuck turned and looked across the field. Seeing my opportunity I drew back my bow, and after a tense 30 seconds, I finally had a good angle to shoot. The arrow flew true

and I ran to inspect the old grassland grizzly I had downed.

I live for the thrill of pursuing woodchucks with the bow during the summer. This practice keeps my shooting skills sharp for deer season. Most landowners readily welcome my efforts to thin the ranks of woodchucks on their property, and best of all, I have a chance to match wits with a quarry that deserves more respect than it receives from most hunters.

The tough old bean field chuck I shot last summer will be mounted just like old Mr. G. Perhaps I'll even name it Junior G, although its size certainly belies that status. Someday my own kids may open a cardboard box at school and reveal the new Mr. G to their classmates, and a grassland grizzly may thrill another class of students. □

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The King of Hearts

By Joe Parry

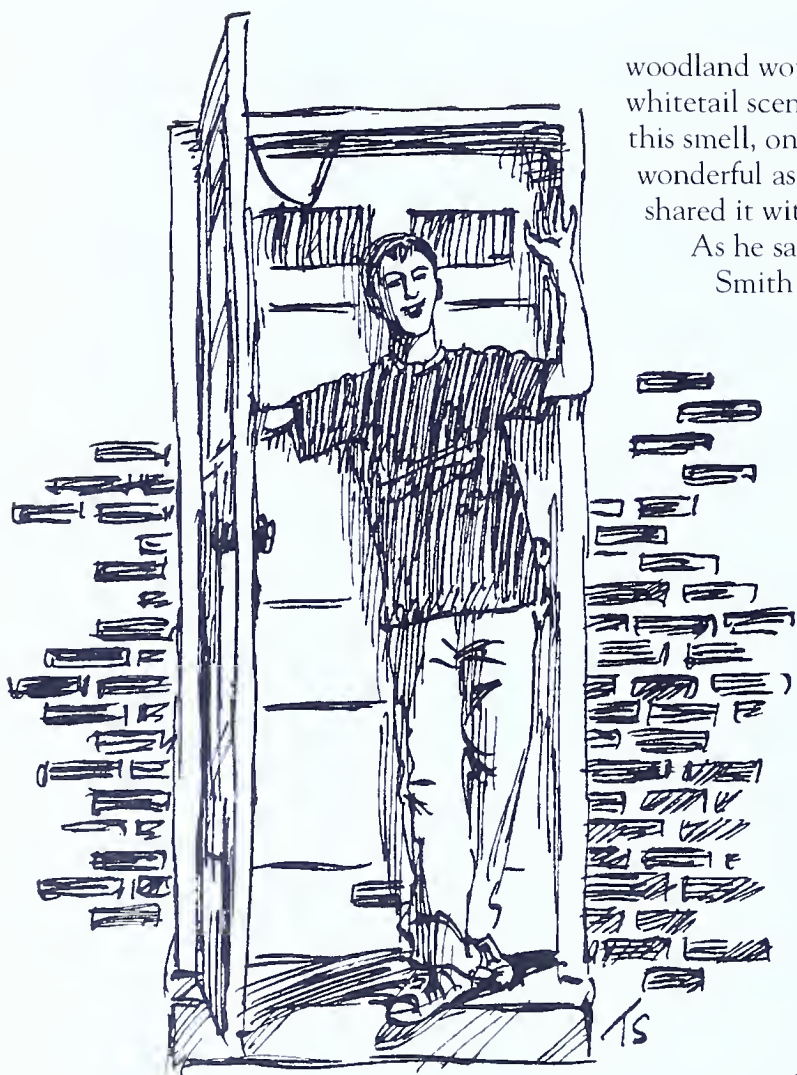
HE SAT in the autumn woods, in the warmth of the sun, but with an empty heart, because he sat alone. He was without the best companion he'd ever had in some 48 years of hunting. Lighting a meditative pipe, he wondered why his own son, a son he'd brought into the world with a dream that he'd be a hunter, a companion unparalleled, a son with somewhat of an advantage because Pop had bought him an arsenal of guns even before he came into the world, would ever give up hunting. The old father needed an answer. But where would he find it? He wondered if sitting alone in the woods with only his personal God would provide the answer.

As he sat there he penned a few words for when he returned home to the word processor. He wanted to share his feelings with other mothers and fathers who, perhaps, were also perplexed over the loss of a child as a hunting

companion. He needed desperately to find a resolution, and he wished he could tell others how to handle the hurt that accompanies this kind of emotional transition.

It had been several years since his son Justin had shared the excitement of preparing for the autumn hunts for grays, grouse and turkeys, and the sacred winter hunts for the King of Hearts — the white-tailed





buck. Just like water cutting its way through granite boulders over long periods of time, the old man was losing his love of the hunt, because of his son, and it hurt him deeply.

On this afternoon the skies were clear and, for the end of October, it was warm. There was none of that heavy, damp air that normally carries the smells of the autumn forest, the earthy smell of dampened mosses in runoff troughs cut through the hillsides by rain and snow, but the heavy musk odor brought on by the whitetails' rutting moon was clearly evident. On this day the air was loaded with it. A bit soon for the bucks to be in full rut, he thought, and odd that such a dry

woodland would be so heavy with the whitetail scent. Despite his deep love of this smell, on this day it was not as wonderful as those times when he shared it with a hunting son.

As he sat there he fondled the old Smith turkey call he had used since 1984. To break his

melancholy mood, and the golden silence of the enchanting endless mountain, he sent out a few kee kee run calls. Still an unbelievable sound the call had, he thought, still as wild and real as it was going on 20 years ago. Smiling, albeit with some difficulty, he sat back and refired his thinking pipe. His eyes became heavy with the warm sun. The pipe was loosely clenched between bottom teeth and gums — the old man never wore his upper denture to the

hunting woods. A scratching sound soon caused him to open his eyes halfway, and he noticed a squirrel burying hickory nuts beneath the dry, dusty leaves of the fruitless white oaks. Again he smiled, wishing his son was there.

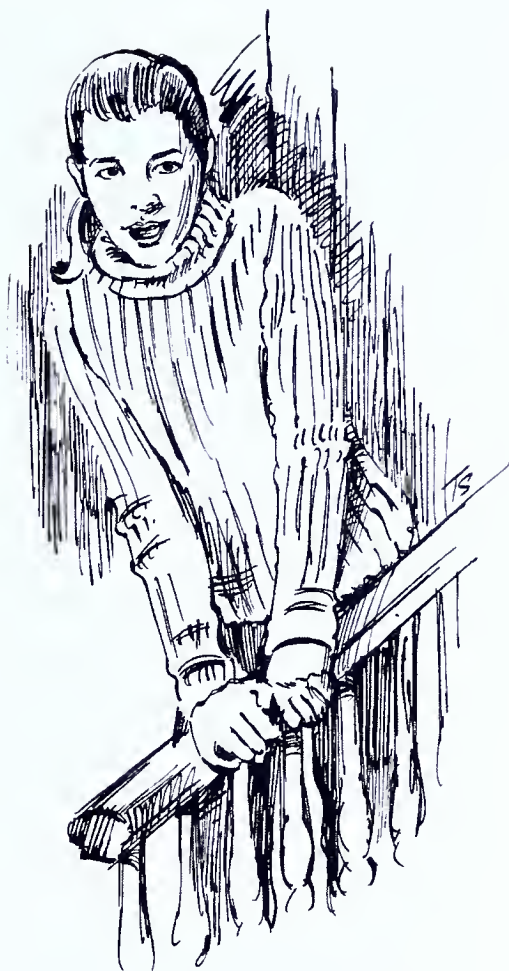
He worried about the wild turkeys and the deer, as there were virtually no white oak acorns this year. He wondered if they would find enough food. There was, however, a bumper crop of hickory nuts and plenty of apples. It was the best year for apples he'd seen since the early '50s. Still, apples would not provide the fat needed during a harsh winter.

He became sleepy again despite the antics of the squirrels. He'd counted a dozen in just a quarter of an hour, and he could have easily taken a limit if he had

wanted. He sent out a few more notes from his box call, and then closed his eyes. As he dozed off he thought about the three different flocks containing more than 150 birds he had seen just a week before. Today he'd not seen so much as a feather. Not even scratchings in the leaves of Tioga County's Hickory Ridge — the old man's second home.

When his pipe slipped from his mouth he awoke and took a small thermos of lemon tea from his daypack, but before pouring a cup, he scanned the hollow below. More than a dozen bronze-backed turkeys were picking their way up onto the bench below, perhaps 40 yards away: Straight into the old shooting lane, he thought. He could have killed one easily, but the old man, the father without his son sitting beside him beneath the giant oak, never gave the golden opportunity a second thought. He watched as the turkeys fed out of range. After his tea and a handful of vanilla wafers he stood up, brushed off the leaf litter and headed for home.

He was lonely without his son, a son he loved as God loves the earth and His children, and as his dry lips moved in talking to God and himself, the words could barely be discerned: "Reckon it's the old thing about how you can lead a horse to water, but ya can't make 'em drink." He thought about how he raised his son to love and respect all aspects of the hunt, and how difficult it was to fit a round piece of wood into a square hole. He had to face the fact that his son didn't want to hunt, and he had to learn to respect that. He had to accept that his son was a man now, independent, set in his ways and obviously making his own decisions. His son was the arrow and the old man the bow that had sent him forth to seek and defeat his life's challenges. He had raised him well in the ways of a gentleman. The old man realized that he had to quit feeling sorry for himself. He'd live his last years hunting, savoring the



memories of those yesterdays when his boy hunted with him. The old man had, in fact, not lost him, only his companionship in the killing fields for a few days out of a year, which amounts to nothing when you string them together.

Justin would always be his son, and he had a daughter, too. Perhaps Erika would share in the autumn ritual and tote her grandfather's Savage Model 99 .300 Savage in the deer woods. The old-timer wondered why, though, that Justin greeted him at the door when he returned home from hunting. Why he never failed to say, "Hey, Pop, how did ya do out there today?" Why did he look disheartened when told about game passed up? Stupid old man; the answer is as clear as the big nose on your wrinkled face. It's because he,

not in fact the white-tailed buck, is the King of Hearts in your mind, and you the King of Hearts in his. You taught him well and, therefore, would never really lose him to anything.

The old man whistled as he walked home that afternoon. He could imagine his son on the front steps of their old home. He'd whistle loud and clear, smiling as he used to. He'd wave to his son from high atop the hill in the big field, knowing for certain his son would be there for him, with that ear-to-ear grin. His son would say, "Hey, Pop, how did ya do out there today?"

The old-timer would smile and with a twinkle through puddling eyes would say, "Just fine, Son, just fine. In fact, better than ever."

As part of his resolution, the old man thought about his — and his son's — beloved white-tailed bucks. He realized that deer shared only a small space in their hearts, however important to each man. That fact would never change, but he re-

mained satisfied with that knowledge, knowing he gave his son the love of the majestic whitetails, which now seemed stronger than ever. He now knew in his heart that his beloved son had made a choice that obviously filled his heart, and with that, of course, the old man was glad.

One morning the old man hollered to his daughter, who was upstairs in her room in the old farmhouse. "Hey, Erika, are you busy tomorrow morning?"

Erika came trotting down the stairs and said, "Hey, Poppa, what's up?"

The old man smiled, and just sat there sensing his daughter's mood, and

then, like a prayer, magically she asked, "Poppa, how can ya tell a doe track from a buck track when you're hunting?"

The old man settled deep into his old recliner, smiled and began, "Well, Darlin', when we go out this year, I'll show ya, but ya gotta always remember, if you're gonna hunt with me, whatever sex you decide the deer is from scrutinizing its cloven track, it's never certain."

As that old tune goes, "Bless the beasts and the children . . ." □

The old man had, in fact, not lost his son, only his companionship in the killing fields for a few days out of a year, which amounts to nothing when you string them together.

COVER PHOTO BY TERRY WILLS

CENTRE COUNTY WCO TERRY WILLS took this photo, which captured first place in the "Wildlife" category in a photograph contest for Game Commission employees, along Jacks Hollow Road near Duboistown in Lycoming County. The cubs scrambled up the tree and were patiently waiting for their mother, which had been captured in a culvert trap. While waiting for the tranquilizing drug to take effect on the bruin, so he could gather data for the Game Commission's bear management program and tag the animal, Terry seized the opportunity to snap the photo. Terry said that after the female was released, the family ambled off, and the experience was just another memorable part of being a WCO.

That which is not good for the beehive cannot be good for the bees.

— Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*

An Underground Turnaround

By Larissa Rose

PGC Information Writer

Photos by the author

I CAN'T BELIEVE I volunteered for this." That's all I can think as I carefully make my way down the rough path. Even though the weather is unseasonably warm for February, the sun never hits this spot, and the cool air near the cave-like tunnel entrance keeps the rocks snow-covered, making the descent a little tricky.

"I can't believe I was so excited for this. What was I thinking?" I remember my enthusiasm over the past couple of weeks, even just an hour ago, as the group met up to head to the site. I felt so prepared as I was fitted with the oh-so-cool equipment I'd get to wear. But I guess the apprehension I was beginning to feel had shown up on my face.

"Don't worry," the biologist aides assure me. "There's been some collapse, but most of the big boulders have already fallen." Then they laugh. And I laugh too. After all, it's not the boulders that I'm afraid of. It's the bats. Hundreds and hundreds of bats. The little buggers that drive my mother from her bedroom at three o'clock in the morning, a sheet wrapped around her head, screaming for my brother to "get rid of that thing!"

Even I couldn't help but freak out anytime one would show up in our house. I'd been told plenty of times about their amazing navigational abilities. How, even though they appeared to be flying aimlessly, they knew exactly where they were going and what was in front of them. I just knew, though, that one was going to fly right into

my face. None ever did, of course, but just thinking of voluntarily putting myself in a confined space with hundreds of the little dive-bombers makes me nervous.

Of course, the bats I am about to encounter are a little different than the ones that find their way from our attic into our bedrooms. Sure, many of them are the little and big browns that favor old brick farmhouses, but while they always flew around while I was sleeping, on this excursion I am going to be walking around while they are sleeping.

It's winter, and the six species of bats that remain in Pennsylvania this time of year are hibernating. They hang in masses in caves and abandoned tunnels and mines throughout the state, waking every two weeks or so for a drink to re-hydrate their tiny bodies. It's during their hibernation that the Game Commission tries to count them for the Winter Hibernacula Survey.

So here I am, part of the convoy of Game Commission and, in this case, Turnpike Commission staff heading into an abandoned railroad tunnel in Somerset County. The 1,000-foot tunnel was started in the 1880s as part of Vanderbilt's South Penn Railroad system, but was never completed, once the railroad was abandoned. The tunnel is now owned by the Turnpike

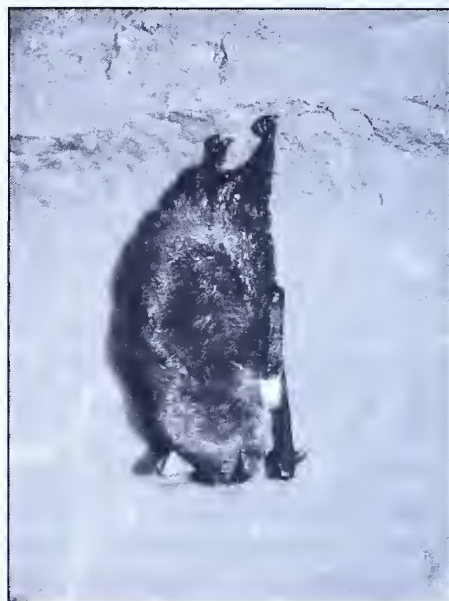
Commission, which graciously allows Game Commission personnel to enter it for the survey. The site contains the endangered Indiana bat, so it's surveyed only every two years, to minimize disturbance to the species. The biologist aides netted some of the Indiana bats that were exiting the cave last year after hibernating, and placed radio transmitters and tags on nine of them. One is known to be dead, so it's hoped that we will come across the remaining eight in the cave today.

As I enter the tunnel, following a string of explorers, I cautiously step over rocks and around puddles, avoiding the black ice that has formed on the tunnel floor. The seven of us are spaced apart, those more familiar with the tunnel moving faster than the rest. I trail along behind, allowing those before me to discover any unexpected obstacles. We haven't walked far before we have to climb up a mountain of dirt and rocks that have fallen from the ceiling over the past 120 years. We're a good 15 feet above the original floor, and it's a little unsettling knowing that everything I'm walking on used to be above me. How much more will come down, and will any of it fall today?

These thoughts quickly disappear, however, as the first bat of the day is spotted. "Who's counting little browns?"

"I got 'em," comes the reply. Different members of the group are assigned a species to keep track of, and the count begins.

It's extremely damp in the tunnel, and I can't believe how warm it's getting. The layers I had put on in the cold of the aboveground world are causing me to sweat, even at the slow pace we're keeping. I step over rotting timbers that are so soft from the moisture that I could easily pull them apart. It's an eerie feeling knowing that these

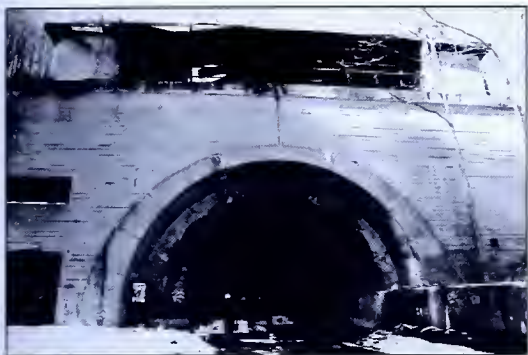


AN ENDANGERED Indiana bat hibernates peacefully in a tunnel of the South Penn Railroad. Note the yellow band, indicating the bat has been in this cave before.

beams were put here by men who were dead before I was even thought of.

Before long, the bats are numbering in the hundreds, and we're getting close to the end of the survey, when the excitement begins. "Sodalis! It's a sodalis, and it's got a band!" Everyone rushes cautiously to where the tiny creature is clinging to the tunnel wall. Sure enough, it's an endangered Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*), and it's sporting one of the eight remaining yellow bands from the spring capture. In the same area, there are more Indianas — 44 in all — and five of them are banded.

The banded bats also had tiny radio transmitters affixed to them, so that the biologists could track where they go when they come out of hibernation. Unfortunately, the transmitters emit a signal for only two weeks. The fact that five of the known eight bats that had been banded exiting this particular tunnel 11 months earlier have returned to the same spot proves site loyalty of the species. This is important, considering Indiana bats are found at only 10 known locations in Pennsylvania. If a site were destroyed or closed up, what would happen to the bats?



MY SECOND SURVEY takes place in Laurel Hill Tunnel, part of the old turnpike. Graffiti and broken glass, as well as rusted doors and fixtures, give the area an eerie feeling.

Now we're back outside, soaking up the sunlight. The numbers are tallied, and the grand total is 1,984 bats: five big browns, four northern long-eareds — which are a species of special concern in Pennsylvania — 44 endangered Indianas, 1,275 little browns, and 656 eastern pipistrelles.

"Well, everyone feeling up to Laurel Hill?" All members of the group look at each other, and decide that, since it's only lunchtime, we might as well. So the convoy rolls on up the turnpike towards Donegal, and we jet across the lanes and drop into the forgotten world of the old turnpike. We drive down the neglected road to the old tunnel, which looks much like the four tunnels on today's turnpike; only approaching it makes me shiver. The remote area has drawn vandals over the years that have left their mark in the form of graffiti-covered walls and broken glass.

We climb the narrow, rusted staircase up to the ventilation shaft, the floor of which is the ceiling of the tunnel. It's a surprisingly open area, and I can walk almost completely erect. The ceiling is smooth, and there aren't many places for a bat to hold on to hibernate, except for the steel pipes in the center that run from floor to ceiling. The survey reveals 117 bats: 112 big brown bats, two eastern pipistrelles, and one eastern small-footed bat — another species of special concern in Pennsylvania. Interestingly, two red bats are found dead in the tunnel; red bats are supposed to fly

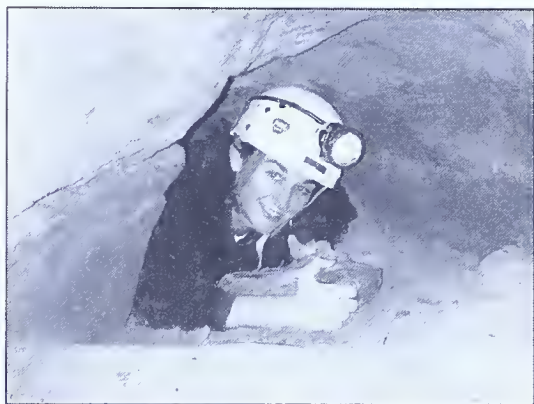
south for the winter.

Now it's two weeks later, and I'm back with Cal Butchkoski, PGC wildlife biologist, as well as John Chenger and Chris Sanders, both biologist aides. We're standing along Route 45 in Huntingdon County, looking down on Spruce Creek and looking up at what they tell me is the entrance to Ruth Cave. Looks more like a wash-out to me, but I take their word for it that there's a gate up there.

Immediately after we begin the climb, I can see the gated entrance. By the time I slither through it on my belly, my entire front is muddy, and I'm a little concerned. The area is small — nothing like the huge tunnel we were in two weeks ago, or the cavernous Canoe Creek mine I was privileged to visit two summers ago. I doubt that I'll be able to stand up at all, and knowing that I could be in here for five hours is less than comforting.

We start to crawl, one-by-one up through the cave. Almost immediately, we begin to see bats. I have to be careful not to bump into any, they're that close. More than once I almost grab one as I reach for a handhold. Not only do I have to watch out for bats when I move, but also for formations. The cave is full of them — fragile forms where water dripping over thousands of years has created beautiful, cascading waterfalls of stones and minerals, as well as towering stalagmites. Some of these sites are still being formed; so touching them could cause irreversible damage.

About 15 minutes into the cave, we come to the first tight crawl. I peer at the tiny hole that I'm supposed to fit through and declare that there is no way I'm going to make it. "Don't worry," they tell me. "We'll talk you through it." And so I sit and watch as one, then two of the guys disappear headfirst into the U-shaped hole. I see



Cal Butchowski

I CAN'T BELIEVE I actually made it through without getting stuck. The tight crawls through Ruth Cave made for an adventure I'll never forget.

their feet pushing off of the cave walls and still wonder how I'm going to do this. I make sure that one of the group follows me, because I'm sure that I'm going to get stuck and he'll have to pull me out.

Now it's my turn. I maneuver onto my stomach and slide toward the hole as if I'm standing on my head. As soon as I start through, I can see Cal on the other side, and I feel better knowing I don't have far to go. As I wriggle my way through, I'm instructed to corkscrew so that I end up on my back, pushing with my feet, and before I know it, I'm free! That wasn't so bad after all. Of course, seeing two guys bigger than me go through the space helped convince me I could do it.

We continue on to the next tight crawl, in which I have to keep my left arm under me in order to fit through. That's not a good feeling, but I make it through successfully. Before long, we're in "the great room," a huge area with 40-foot ceilings. We walk down different corridors, each of which grows narrower as we go. Here's where all the bats, and most of the formations, are. Hundreds of bats cover the walls, some tucked in nooks and under ledges. By the time we finish counting — 1,113 bats in all — and make our way back through the tight

spaces and out into the fresh air, it's almost 5:30 in the evening, and we've been underground six hours.

In all three of the sites I visited, bat numbers were up slightly from the previous years. This could mean that Pennsylvania's bat population is growing, or it could mean that the places where these bats always hibernated are no longer available, either through closure or destruction. This is where the value of the winter hibernacula surveys really becomes apparent. Bats require specific environmental factors in order to hibernate successfully. If they find a spot that meets all of their needs, they will return there year after year. If a survey has never been performed in a cave, mine or tunnel, and no one knows there are bats hibernating there, the area could be disturbed, destroyed, closed off or reclaimed, killing what bats are there and preventing other bats from going there in the future.

While only three of Pennsylvania's hibernating species are considered endangered or of special concern, researchers throughout the U.S. have noted significant declines of all bat species, many of which are blamed on lowered survival rates during hibernation because of closure, alteration, destruction or vandalism of hibernacula.

The destruction of other hibernacula is the case in Alexander Caverns in Milroy, Mifflin County, which is located a stone's throw away from a limestone quarry. Once a commercial cave, taking tourists through on paths and in boats, the site provides an excellent opportunity to count the hundreds of bats that hibernate there. The stairs into the cave, as well as the worn walking paths, are a welcome change from Ruth the day before. Alexander has the most formations of any cave in the state, and it's absolutely breathtaking. Everywhere I look there are formations on top of formations. And among many of them are bats. By the time the survey is through, we've counted 1,745 bats, which is more



PGC Biologist CAL BUTCHKOSKI (left) and biologist aides CHRIS SANDERS (center) and JOHN CHENGER (right) search for bats among the formations of Alexander Caverns. Below, CAL and PGC Environmental Planner JIM LEIGEY spy several bats clinging to the walls of a room in the caverns.



than double the last count in 1997.

While I think it's great the numbers are up so high, I'm quickly informed that this is probably because other hibernacula in the area have been destroyed. As it turns out, we're performing the survey as part of a request for a permit to mine even closer to the cave. Having years of survey counts in hand proves quite valuable when arguing for or against granting a mining permit. Not knowing what species, if any, are using a site could prove detrimental to the state's bat population.

Why should we worry about bats? Well, besides being an important and interesting part of our diverse world, the tiny creatures are bug-eating machines. A little brown bat makes several feeding flights each night, and is capable of catching 1,200 insects per hour. A nursing female may eat her weight in insects nightly. In areas where there are large maternity colonies, such as the land near Canoe Creek church, farmers use fewer pesticides than other parts of the state, which creates a healthier environment and water supply.

The results of the winter hibernacula surveys have resulted in efforts to protect these sites. Some caves and mines have been gated to allow the bats to enter, but not humans, greatly reducing disturbance that could cause bats to leave the site, never to return. Requests for mining permits have been rejected to protect important hibernacula, such as those where the endangered Indiana bat is found, or where large numbers of bats hibernate. It's not known how many sites may have been destroyed or closed up without being surveyed, but it is known that the program protects not only bats, but also other species that depend on underground refuges during the winter, such

as snakes, woodrats and other reptiles and mammals.

Over a period of 16 years, 450 sites in 47 counties have been surveyed. Each year, we try to get to between 10 and 50 sites, depending on schedules and landowner permissions. In 2002, 21 sites were surveyed, with a total count of 47,507 bats. Most sites had higher counts than in previous years.

After being face to face with thousands of bats, and invading the territory where they sleep, I've come to understand and appreciate the creatures I once feared. I know how beneficial they are to our ecosystem, and how important it is to know where they are, so we can keep their habitats from being destroyed. □

Ned Smith Legacy

By Shirley G. Brosius

HAVE YOU HEARD the *toot* of a saw-whet owl, which sounds like the backup signal of a garbage truck? Have you munched on cattails or tasted crayfish cocktail? Has the heartbeat of a hummingbird tickled your palm? These are just a few of the experiences made possible by the Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art located in Millersburg.

Currently housed in the historic Daniel Miller house, the nonprofit organization has launched a \$6 million capital campaign to build a 34,000-foot facility that will include art and exhibit galleries, a 250-seat theater, a Ned Smith room in tribute to the organization's namesake, and an education pavilion with an outdoor classroom deck. Construction is expected to begin this summer. Twin-Valley Players, a local thespian group, will be the Center's resident theater company, offering performances and

scheduling other theater activities.

Internationally known for his paintings and writings, E. Stanley "Ned" Smith was born in 1919 and lived most of his life in Millersburg. He died in 1985 at the age of 65. His illustrations graced the covers of 160 editions of *Pennsylvania Game News*, and the self-taught artist worked for eight years as staff artist — and, for a time, acting editor — of the magazine, and continued for 30 years as a contributing artist and writer. Written from journal entries, Ned's popular *Game News* column, "Gone for the Day," was published in book form in 1971, and has been selling well ever since.

Ned's illustrations also appeared in *National Geographic*, and he drew pen-and-ink chapter headings for the magazine's 2-volume set on animals of North America.

Ned originated pencil-drawing quizzes that ran for 15 years in *Sports Afield*, and his work also appeared in *Outdoor Life*, *Field and Stream*, *National Wildlife* and other publications.

After Ned's death, his wife Marie pondered what to do with his art. She credits John Strawbridge, former curator of Hershey Museum, for convincing her that her idea of a center for nature and art might become a reality. He drew the leaf, pen and feather logo now used by the center, and coordinated the gift agreement signed by Marie.



THE NED SMITH Center for Nature and Art will be located on about 500 acres south of Route 209 in northern Dauphin County on Berry Mountain, land that Ned Smith once roamed to study, draw and write about wildlife.

Original Ned Smith paintings have brought as much as \$30,000 at auction, and prints now bring thousands of dollars as well, according to Walter Jones, executive director of the center. Marie donated a collection valued at \$1.5 million, which includes hundreds of her husband's original paintings, drawings, field sketches, journals and native North American artifacts to the center.

The new facility will be located on about 500 acres south of Route 209 in northern Dauphin County on Berry Mountain, land that Ned Smith once roamed to study, draw and write about wildlife. The site was acquired through gifts, purchase and a 99-year lease, and the organization is applying for federal and foundation grants. With forests, rock outcroppings, a creek and meadowlands, the acreage is ideally suited to the center's mission of developing awareness of the value of natural resources and promoting contact with the natural environment.

The 3-level complex will harmonize with the landscape, which slopes toward Wiconisco Creek, according to Jones. "It's a pretty unusual thing that we're trying to do," Jones said. "There are other centers across the country that exhibit natural history art and wildlife art, but most of those are not also into programming about natural history itself, and many of those galleries are not situated in a picturesque setting like we will have."

The organization, which was incorporated in 1994, is already hard at work carrying on Ned's legacy with programs for people of all ages. The saw-whet owl migration project, annually held at three sites, draws dozens of volunteers ranging from teenagers to octogenarians. They include biologists and pipe fitters, school kids and retirees. One 17-year-old volunteer has become a federally licensed bander and is contemplating a career in ornithology. Scott Weidensaul, the natural history writer who heads up the migration research project for the center, was himself drawn

to his career by the work of Ned Smith. One of Weidensaul's books, *Living on the Wind*, was nominated for a Pulitzer prize.

During the last weekend in July the eighth annual Ned Smith Wildlife Festival last year drew more than 5,000 visitors. Nationally recognized guests spoke and led some of the workshops. Visitors enjoyed hands-on sessions of fly-casting demonstrations, bat studies, woodcarving basics, art contests, nature photography, origami and a host of other activities. Throughout the year the Center also hosts school, scout and community groups for field trips and lectures, sponsors a butterfly count, keeps a count of waterfowl on the Susquehanna, and the list goes on.

Before graduating from high school, Ned had already camped near a mountain spring to study the spring-time migration of warblers. After high school he turned down an aunt's offer to finance a business school education when she declined sending him to art school.

His engagement to his high school sweetheart, Marie Reynolds, lasted three years, as they postponed marriage because of the uncertainty of World War II. Ned was initially deferred because of his work as a lathe operator, and then the war ended.

After the plant where he worked closed, Ned took a job illustrating guns and ammunition for Small Arms Technical Publishing Company in South Carolina. There the couple lived on a rice plantation for six months and found new subjects for Ned's work — water moccasins and painted buntings. Realizing they preferred living in Pennsylvania, however, Ned and Marie returned to Millersburg and eventually Ned took a job with the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Eight years later he turned his attention to full-time

The one of a kind Ned Smith Commemorative Pennsylvania Long Rifle, with all the accouterments, scrimshawed powder and primer horns, speed loader, ball starter, hunting knife, possibles bag and gun case, is historically correct. The rifle is 50-caliber, suitable for field use or as a collector's item. Raffle tickets for the rifle are \$10 each, three for \$25. Also available are a Long Rifle Ned Smith poster for \$10, plus \$4 shipping, and a Long Rifle patch for \$6, plus \$1.50 shipping and handling for 1-5 patches.

The proceeds will benefit the building fund of the Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art. For more information, contact the Center at P.O. Box 33, Millersburg, PA 17061. Phone: 717-692-3699; or visit their web site at www.nedsmithcenter.org.

freelancing, using pen and ink, tempera, watercolors, acrylics and oils to do projects.

His first freelance assignment, a cover illustration for *Pennsylvania Angler* called "Bird Life Along the Streams," ran in full color, something most unusual for a budding artist.

On snowy days, with Marie frequently by his side, Ned combed the fields and mountains, looking for animal tracks. On summer mornings he fished the Susquehanna River, and then, in afternoons, turned his attention to digging on an island just south of Millersburg, where he and Marie found dozens of Native North American artifacts — tools of bone and stone, arrowheads and sinkers. Spring and fall might find the couple traversing the country, visiting wildlife refuges from Pennsylvania to Idaho. While Marie drove their station wagon, Ned sat in back, camera lens

propped on an open window, waiting for a chance to snap a gyrfalcon or a scarlet tanager. Twenty thousand of his slides are now housed at the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences.

Once when Marie walked out of a resort dining room, she spotted a weasel cornering a mouse. Yelling for Ned, she tried to keep the weasel at bay until he readied his camera, but the hungry animal wouldn't wait. Marie grabbed the mouse's tail and played tug-of-war with the weasel until Ned captured the moment on film. That series eventually appeared in a magazine.

Contrary to what some may think, Ned did not use his photographs to create a piece of art. According to Marie, he used them as references to check details — the number of feathers and precise coloration. Instead of copying backgrounds from actual places, he created suitable settings for his wildlife paintings. But ever a man of integrity, he insisted details be authentic. "You can tell what kind of trees they are, what kind of bark," Marie said. "You can tell your plants from the accuracy of the art."

Once Ned captured the idea for a painting on paper, he worked quickly. "He used to say it took him 20 years and two weeks to complete a picture," Marie said. "Twenty years to get the information and two weeks to do it."

Ned was interested in sharing his love of wildlife art with others, but gave lessons to only a few people, because of his humility about lacking a college degree. Walter Jones credits Ned's personality and character for the great support people in the region have given the Ned Smith Center. "People truly not only loved his art — they really loved Ned," Jones said. "He was a very genuine individual, and he never lost his sense of wonder. He was so enthusiastic about the natural world, and he was so good at infecting people with that enthusiasm."

Currently the Center has assets of more than \$3 million and has raised \$500,000

toward the new facility. This past January, the center was awarded \$2 million through the Governor's Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program budget.

To raise additional funds, the center is holding a raffle for a commemorative Pennsylvania Long Rifle, complete with possible bag, powder horns and knives. The rifle is the type made famous by Daniel Boone. Ned sketched collections of rifles, and the center holds a portfolio of more than 140 page proofs that were never published. The raffle drawing will be held at Wildlife Festival 2002 on July 27. According to Jones, the economic value of the center is important to the region. The Wildlife Festival already is estimated to have an annual economic impact of between \$185,000 and \$300,000. "Eco-tourism is the fastest growing form of recreation in the country, and communities like we have in the region here can retain their small-town qualities while achieving the economic benefits of having visitors come in," he said.

The area has much to offer visitors. Millersburg's historic ferries, which Ned painted on canvas, are reputed to be the only all-wooden stern paddle wheelers operating in the country. Other attractions include a restored railroad station, a suspension footbridge rebuilt after the flood of 1972, a general store with pressed sheet-metal facade, a Victorian bed and break-

fast, and a museum, which displays some of Ned's early American artifacts and other memorabilia.

Once the center opens, exhibits of Ned Smith's art will be rotated in the galleries to focus on his diverse range of interests, according to Jones. He also expects to host natural history exhibits from other centers and museums. "I can see us having an exhibit on the evolution of fishing equipment and the art of fly tying," he said. "We may have an exhibit on wolves in Pennsylvania. Ned painted some beautiful images of wolves. He was as much interested in the life history of the animals he painted as he was in getting them on canvas."

Ned Smith made nature appear interesting and understandable through art and writing, and that is the legacy the center strives to keep alive. "We want people to make that emotional connection with the environment," Jones said. "People will honor and protect things they love and understand."

For more information readers may write The Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art, P.O. Box 33, Pine and Walnut Streets, Millersburg, PA 17061; phone: 717-692-3699; or e-mail: nedsmith@epix.net. The Center's website address is www.nedsmithcenter.org. □

Books in Brief

(Not available from the Game Commission.)

Jackie Bushman's Top 50 Whitetail Tactics, by Jackie Bushman, The Lyons Press, 246 Goose Lane, P.O. Box 480, Guilford, CT 06437, www.lyonspress.com, 176 pp., \$19.95, plus \$4.48 shipping & handling. After 15 years of heading up Buckmasters and hosting the acclaimed Buckmasters TV series, Jackie Bushman has picked up a wealth of information on whitetail hunting, and now — for the first time — has put it all down in his first book. Provided in a clear, well-written manner, and with plenty of color photos, Bushman's tips and techniques are sure to make you a better deer hunter.



The Rescue of Ricky Russo

By Chris Heil

Montgomery County WCO

THE OPENING DAY of the 1999 buck season is one I'll never forget. I was in Luzerne County at the time, a district that consisted of more than 500 square miles encompassing 12 townships, seven boroughs, the city of Hazelton and four state game lands.

I had been out patrolling most of the previous night, so caught only a few hours of sleep before the alarm sounded at 5:30. After a quick shower and several cups of strong coffee, I began to sort through the mounting paperwork on my desk when I heard a knock at the door. Deputies Tim Readler and Mike Rospendowski, followed by Deputy trainee Kenny Pfeil, stood on the porch, anxious to begin the day. I invited them in and we mapped out our strategies. I assigned Readler and Rospendowski to patrol one half of the district, while Pfeil and I would go to the other. After making sure we were equipped for the bitter November day we headed out.

The day began cold and clear, but by late afternoon, dark ominous clouds had rolled in from the northwest and the temperature began to plummet. Freezing rain fell first, followed by heavy snow. As the last hours of daylight faded, the storm worsened and let loose with so much snow that hunters were caught in a whiteout. At times, visibility was less than 20 yards, and the wind-whipped snow caused my eyes to water as I checked licenses and deer.

Shortly after dark, deputies Readler and Rospendowski radioed me, requesting assistance with an investigation in Sugarloaf Township. When we got there Deputy

Rospendowski filled me in on what was going on. Responding to a report about shooting after hours, Readler and Rospendowski apprehended five hunters with two big bucks that had just been killed. The deer were not tagged and had been hastily loaded into the back of the truck. The hunters were heading home when Readler and Rospendowski stopped them. Both the inclement weather and the hunters' uncooperative attitudes hampered our investigation. By the time we sorted out the details, collected evidence, confiscated the two bucks and issued citations, it was after 7 p.m.

Opening day had been unusually busy. Reported violations started coming in across the radio shortly after legal shooting time and continued steadily throughout the evening. We ended up issuing 14 citations and 21 warnings, confiscated seven deer and seized six rifles.

When Readler, Rospendowski, Pfeil and I returned to my house, I told them we would assemble the next morning at 6 o'clock. I was hanging the confiscated deer in an evidence locker when I heard dispatcher Rich Walton radioing me from the region office in Dallas. I wondered what type of problem it could be.

Walton told me he had received a call from a hunting camp in Glen Oaks, reporting that one of their party did not return to camp. Now 7:30 p.m., the temperature had dropped

below freezing and the snow was piling up. I told Walton that I was on my way to the hunting camp, all the while hoping that the hunter would be there when I arrived; it was a horrible night to be lost in the woods.

Shortly before 8 o'clock I arrived at Glen Oaks, and as I pulled into the driveway, the stepfather of the missing hunter greeted me. Soft-spoken and congenial, the man introduced himself as Pete Dipol from New Jersey. He invited me into his cabin and introduced me to his hunting companions, George Boos and Gary Bueller, also New Jersey residents. All three of them wore the same nervous expression.

Dipol explained that he had last seen his stepson Ricky Russo from Paulsboro, New Jersey, at 6 o'clock that morning, as he headed to his hunting spot on SGL 187. Described as 33 years old, about 5-6, with brown hair and brown eyes and weighing approximately 175 pounds, Russo had not made contact with his party at all that day. Dressed in a fluorescent orange coat, overalls and a knit cap, he left carrying a .300 Magnum rifle and a deer drag rope. According to Dipol, Russo didn't have a flashlight or compass.

After gathering the facts, I realized the severity of Russo's situation. If he was lost, then he had been battling the severe weather for more than 14 hours. A lot of possibilities raced through my mind. He could be severely injured or dying or — the worst-case scenario — already dead. No one knew, but I realized that the chances for his survival decreased with every passing second.

Using the phone, I called the Pennsylvania State Police Barracks in Hazelton. I explained the situation to the dispatcher and asked if she could contact the Luzerne County Emergency Services Unit. Within minutes

of my call, emergency personnel from all over the county had been notified of a lost hunter on SGL 187. In no time, firemen came from White Haven, Dennison and Foster townships. Luzerne County sheriff deputies with a tracking bloodhound were also called, as well as the Civil Air Patrol Search Team. Now approaching 9 o'clock, rescuers from all over the region were collecting their equipment and mustering their personnel. Most of the local rescuers and I had worked together before, searching for missing people on the game lands. Unfortunately, the four previous times we had gathered for rescue attempts yielded only grisly discoveries of dead bodies.

Shortly after 9 p.m., State Police Corporal Robert Hilecki arrived, followed by Trooper Andrea Weichman in her cruiser. Hilecki, Weichman and I came up with a plan that had Weichman meet and help organize the rescuers' rendezvous point on Route 437 at Honeyhole Road, and had Hilecki and me take Pete Dipol and hike into the area of Russo's deer stand.

The driving wind and snow continued, and the sky remained thick with low-lying clouds, impeding our search and making an air search impossible. Finally, we arrived in the area of Russo's deer stand. Unable to find fresh tracks, we did recover a snow-covered blanket that Dipol identified as Russo's, which he used to keep warm while sitting on stand. The fact that Russo did not have it with him was perceived as a bad omen. Corporal Hilecki and I decided not to proceed any farther, because we didn't want to ruin any scent trails Russo might have left. Dismayed, we turned back and slogged through the whitened woodland, arriving back at the hunting cabin shortly after 11 p.m.

By the time Hilecki and I made our way back to the Route 437 rendezvous area, the Luzerne County Emergency Services Mobile Command Center had arrived and set up and already had organized the searchers, who were on standby. We were told that more searchers and the sheriff depu-

ties with bloodhounds were on their way, but the ugly weather was slowing everyone down.

Now past midnight and with the wind chill factor well below zero, it seemed as if the weather had a personal vendetta against our rescue efforts. In my mind, time was running out for Russo; he had been out there for more than 18 hours now.

As the snow swirled around me, I pulled Hilecki and Wiechman aside and told them that I had devised a last resort plan; too much time had slipped away and our search efforts needed to be more proactive. As the rest of the searchers arrived, I explained that we could post people at various points around the perimeter of the eastern side of the game lands, then I would drive into different areas, and using my vehicle's P.A. system, call Russo's name, asking him to fire his rifle if he could hear my broadcast. It was a long shot, we agreed, but we had nothing to lose by trying.

We had a dozen waiting searchers, and Russo's stepfather and friends agreed to assist us as "standers." Before leaving with Hilecki to place the standers, I assigned Trooper Weichman to the hunting cabin vicinity, instructing her to activate her cruiser's sirens and lights every five minutes for directional reference, much like a lighthouse guiding ships on a foggy night. Perhaps Russo would hear the siren and make it to the cabin on his own.

SGL 187 is an extensive tract, covering more than 8,000 acres, and it's adjacent to more than 40,000 acres of remote private and state park property. The area has some dangerous and inhospitable terrain, consisting of everything from lowland hemlock swamps to the steep cliffs of Yeager Mountain.

I drove out of Glen Oaks and made a left onto Honeyhole Road. I stopped every quarter mile and turned my vehicle into the woods, broadcasting the same

message over and over again at full volume and elongating each syllable into its own word, "Ricky Russo, Ricky Russo, if you can hear me, fire your rifle." Within 10 minutes I arrived at the first gated road on the game lands. I opened the gate and began a long, treacherous ride into the rolling interior of SGL 187. The road was in terrible shape from the deep snow and underlying patches of ice, and even with four wheel drive, I constantly fought for control of my truck. Although it was a slow moving process, I pushed on, forging through the now flooded Nescopeck Creek, and onward and upward onto the face of Mount Yeager. I stopped when and where I could, broadcasting my call into the areas I thought Russo might be. With my window down, I listened, hoped, and prayed silently that I would hear a shot in response to my booming bellows. I had been on this crusade for more than an hour when I came to a fallen pine tree stretching across the road. In my attempt to turn around in such a tight, steep spot, I began to slide and nearly slid off the edge of the mountain into the abyss of darkness below. To complicate my situation, I had lost all radio contact because of



the terrain and weather conditions. For a few moments, genuine fear came over me like a shadow as I entertained the idea of whether the search would end up rescuing or recovering me. With patience and luck, I managed to steer the truck back down Mount Yeager and forded the swollen creek for the second time.

After a grueling trek back, I arrived at the hunting camp where Trooper Weichmen had diligently continued to signal with her lights and siren. As far as Weichman knew, the status of our search had remained static. Disheartened, I continued on, looking for Corporal Hilecki. As I drove by Pete Dipol's post, he flailed his arms to flag me down. He told me George Boos had contacted him by walkie-talkie from his station, saying that he had heard distant rifle shots. Dipol jumped into the truck and we headed to the southwest end of Glen Oaks where Boos, Hilecki and Bueller were waiting.

At the site, Boos recapped the latest events. He explained that he had heard shots coming from the south toward the north face of Yeager Mountain. In my mind, I tried to triangulate the area and plot out a rescue.

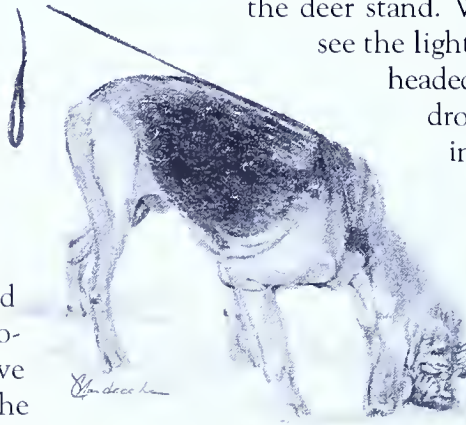
Now 2:45 a.m., I radioed the command center and informed them of our coordinates and of the latest developments. In response, they told me that two sheriffs had arrived with a bloodhound, and they would dispatch them immediately to our location.

It was not long before deputy sheriffs Gerry Van Hoorn and Kevin Martin arrived with their bloodhound, Elmer. Bringing them up to speed on

the 7-hour ordeal, we agreed that only Deputy Van Hoorn, Elmer's handler and Corporal Hilecki would hike back to Russo's deer stand and standby, until I retraced my route back into the game lands. On this jaunt I would repeat my broadcasts into the same areas as before, hoping Russo would again hear me and fire his rifle, allowing Hilecki to gauge the direction of the shot.

I watched the two men and the tracking dog hike back into the woods toward the deer stand. When I could no longer see the light from their flashlights, I headed down Honeyhole Road, drove through the gate and into the game lands, not stopping until I was again through the swollen creek. Ascending Yeager, I began broadcasting my message at full volume at each spot where I had

stopped before, until I had reached the downed tree blocking the road. Carefully, I pulled the truck in, facing a southeasterly direction, and hurled a final series of broadcasts, "Ricky Russo, Ricky Russo, if you can hear me, fire your rifle. Fire your rifle, Ricky Russo." After each transmission I strained to hear a shot through my already frozen left ear, but whistling winds and rattling ice-encrusted branches were the only sounds breaking the silence. Suddenly, my highband radio crackled to life, and I heard the Hazelton State Police dispatcher calling me. I responded and was told to standby, as she relayed a message from Corporal Hilecki. He reported that they had heard a rifle shot and were heading to the area. The dispatcher asked me to resume my broadcasts every two minutes, so that Russo would continue to shoot in response. After my third relay, I received my second message from Hilecki that he, Van Hoorn and Elmer, following a scent trail, were closing in on Russo's position.



Now it was up to them, I thought.

I descended the precipitous road and forded the Nescopeck for the fourth and, I hoped, last time. Again, my radio crackled, and the Hazelton State Police dispatcher relayed the long-awaited news that Hilecki, Van Hoorn and Elmer had located Ricky Russo, and the four were trekking back to Glen Oaks. It was now 4 a.m.

As I pulled into Glen Oaks, Dipol, Bueller and Boos greeted me with grins of appreciation and sighs of relief. Trooper Weichman continued to activate the cruiser lights and sirens until we finally saw the bobbing flashlight beams break through the darkness, followed by the figures of three fatigued men and one dogged bloodhound.

Finally, the time had arrived for me to meet Ricky Russo. In a surge of adrenaline, we all crowded around Russo, exchanging handshakes, introductions and congratulations. After the waves of emotions and excitement died down, we listened to Russo's tale of wandering around in the whiteout as he tried to make it back to camp. It snowed so much that he lost his bearings and ended up walking in the opposite direction from the hunting camp, deeper and deeper into the game lands. Corporal Hilecki explained that Russo was about two miles into the woods, seeking shelter in a grove of hemlock trees, trying to stay warm and calm, when he heard my broadcast. He fired his rifle and waited patiently. He fired only in response to my calls, to conserve his dwindling supply of ammunition.

By the time Russo had finished his story, detailing his terrifying fear and paralyzing cold, he had stopped shivering. I helped him into my truck and transported him to the command center where an EMS ambulance and paramedics were waiting. As we pulled up to the rendezvous area, the cheering rescue party and several television crews greeted Russo. Embarrassed and camera shy, he hurried into the mobile command post to be examined by the

medical personnel.

With the rescue over, I still had one more task. Turning to the crowd, I thanked Corporal Hilecki, Trooper Weichman, and as many rescuers as I could for their undaunted assistance. I also thanked sheriff deputies Van Hoorn and Martin, and I gave Elmer an appreciative pat on the head. In my eyes, everyone who participated in this rescue was a hero.

After the medics completed Russo's physical examination, they reported that he was in remarkably good shape for a man who had spent 22 hours weathering the inclement elements. Layered clothing and good fortune had saved Russo from exposure, hypothermia and probable death. Finally, the crowd dwindled, the snow had stopped falling, and it was time to go home.

Just after 5 a.m. I escorted Russo to my truck and drove him back to Glen Oaks where his stepfather and hunting companions were waiting with coffee and hot chili, as well as good-hearted jibes about his ordeal. As I left the cabin, the Glen Oak hunters inundated me with thanks and handshakes. And Russo? To this day I remember our final exchange of words: "Thanks, man, I was really lost," he said.

I smiled and replied, "Yeah, I know, but now you're found."

It was nearly 6 o'clock when I got home, and my deputies arrived for their assignments for the second day of buck season. I recounted the events of the previous night and then issued their assignments for the day. After their departure, I got out of my uniform and crawled into a hot steaming shower. With the chill finally out of my bones, I took a moment to watch the sunrise cascade across the sky. Totally exhausted, I fell into bed and slept like the dead. □

ED RAKED the spidery tomato plant vines into a pile then put them in a burn barrel along with some other debris from his garden. The spicy smoke crept like ground fog as the valley began to fill with heavy cold air. There would be a frost tonight,

and tomorrow he would hunt with his brother-in-law, Les. Hunting together after the first frost of the hunting season was a tradition they had followed for years.

The next morning Ed waited on the front porch for Les to pick him up. Everything was glazed white except the deep recesses beneath the pines bordering the lane. He reached into his front pocket and removed a penny game his daughter had given him when she was a child.

The game was a plastic bubble maze glued to a card illustrated with rolling fields and woods and hedgerows. Inside the maze was a tiny iron rabbit. The object was to guide the rabbit safely to its burrow at the end of the maze, past a fox and dogs and a pair of red clad hunters, each adversary lurking in its own lair just off the trail. Get too close to a magnetized enemy and the game was over. The rabbit was steered with a magnetic rod held under the card. The green end of the rod pulled the rabbit along, and the red end — of the opposite polarity — pushed the rabbit ahead.

He always carried the game with him to pass time when he had to wait, and sometimes found a solution to a problem while guiding the rabbit to its burrow. When Les pulled into the driveway Ed slipped the magnet into a slot on the card and returned the game to his pocket. He gathered up his shotgun and vest and put them in the truck.

The men were a study in contrast, as different as the poles of the magnetic rod. Ed made his living deep within the earth drilling wells, while Les spent his days above the city, restoring slate roofs. Ed was short and powerfully built, a fireplug of a man. Les was tall, with stork-like features and a gangling gait. Ed liked all the high-tech gadgetry of the modern hunter, while Les was a dyed-in-the-Woolrich traditionalist. Lifelong friends, each took great delight in antagonizing the other by taking the diametrical position on most subjects.

On the way to Ed's cousin's farm they sipped coffee, Les's black, Ed's with cream and extra sugar.

"Did you watch those deer hunting videos I gave you?" asked Ed.

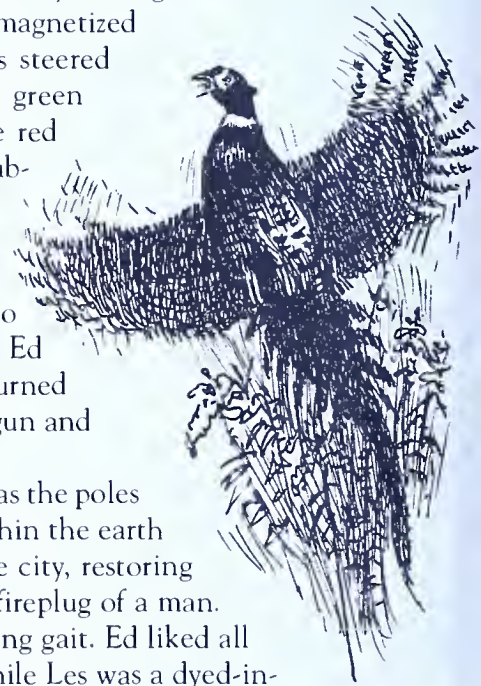
"Some."

"Well?"

"They're all the same. Guy climbs a tree next to a food plot. On cue, a couple does come by, then a small buck or three, then a monster buck. Lots of heavy breathing. Bang! More heavy breathing. Guy gives the cameraman a thumbs-up. Climbs out of

An Early Frost

Penn's Woods Sketchbook / Bob Sopchick



tree. Lots of hooting and hollering. 'There he is! Oh man, what a buck! Let's see, that's 13, 14 points. Yes sir, buck of a lifetime!' Then he repeats to the cameraman what just happened. In the next video the same guy shoots another buck of a lifetime. If I wasn't so naïve I'd swear they were trying to sell me something."

"All those videos weren't like that, Les. Some have tips on scents and treestand placement."

Les smiled. "When you spend every day up on a roof, the last thing you want to do on your day off is sit in a treestand."

LONG BEFORE MAN ENLISTED the dog and falcon and horse as partners in the field, he hunted with others of his own kind. The concerted efforts of two skilled and seasoned hunters is a wonder to behold, and so it was with Ed and Les, who had hunted together since they were kids. Once afield, they were guided by a mutual hunting instinct that bordered on telepathy. Ed was good on close, snap shots, Les on the long ones. Ed bulldozed through the thickest brush, while leggy Les would step through windfalls. This unlikely but effective alliance was based on one of nature's most fundamental principles: opposing forces in balance.

They struck out into the fields, Ed with a new 20-gauge over/under, Les with his battered 12-gauge side-by-side. They combed the weed patches and hedgerows expertly, each taking a rabbit. At the edge of a pine woods Ed put out a grouse that Les sent cartwheeling. Later, Les returned the favor by high-stepping through some tall golden-rod, bumping out a cockbird that towered up into a charge from Ed's stackbarrel.

They spoke little when hunting, but during the course of the morning they couldn't help but remark on the tremendous buckrubs and scrapes they found.

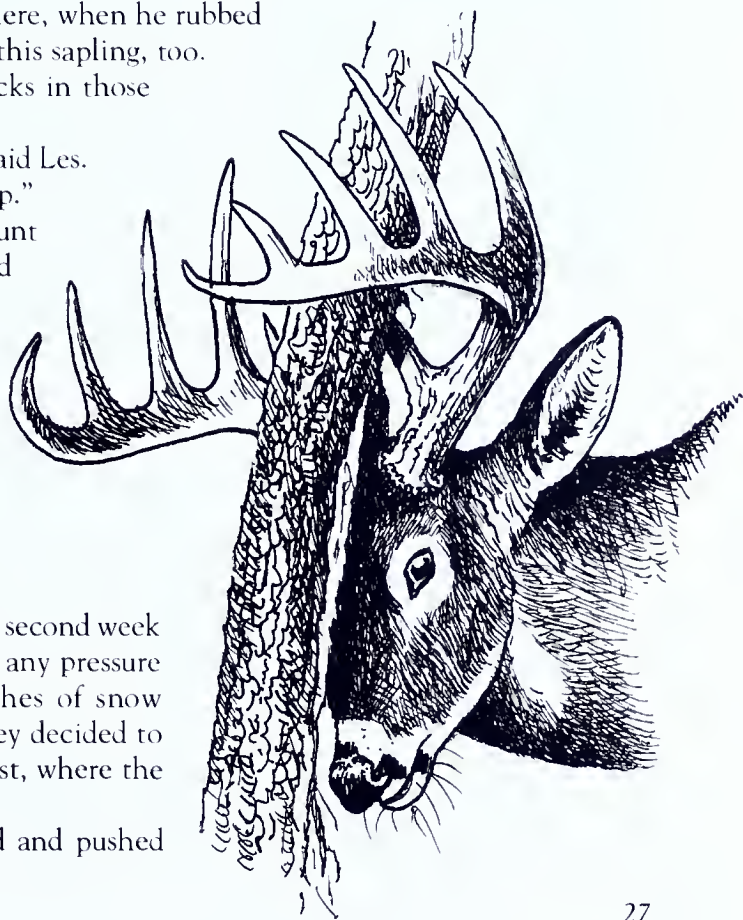
"This is a big buck, Les. Look here, when he rubbed this tree part of his antler rubbed this sapling, too. He has a wide spread like the bucks in those videos."

"Three weeks to deer season," said Les. Let's see if we can scare this guy up."

Later that day they split up to hunt turkeys and scout. When Ed dropped down into a thick ravine, Les caught a glimpse of the bull-necked buck boiling out the other end. Ed was right, Les thought, as he watched the mass of yellow antlers weave through the grape tangles — this was a buck of a lifetime.

THEY BOTH TOOK vacation the second week of deer season, when there wasn't any pressure from other hunters. Several inches of snow helped visibility and tracking. They decided to hunt the south end of the farm first, where the cover was thickest.

The hunters alternately posted and pushed



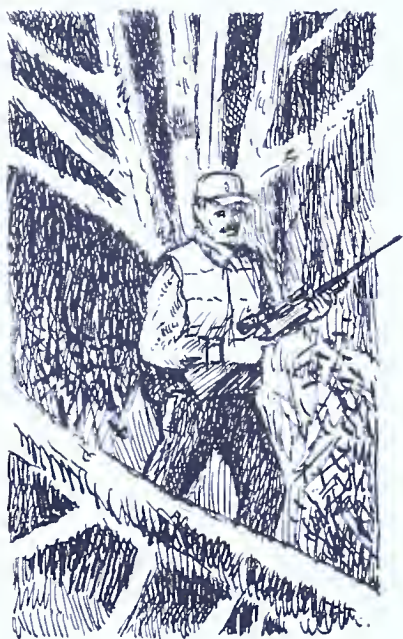
in a series of comma-shaped maneuvers. In this method one man would slowly spiral out from an area that was the head of the comma, then pick up his pace along the comma's tail, driving deer to his partner. With this technique they could cover a lot of ground. They saw deer on every drive, but if the buck was in there he had given them the slip.

They ate dinner at the farmhouse, and Kathy, Ed's cousin, told them about the buck she had seen that morning. She was a school bus driver, and related how only minutes after they entered the thicket a big buck crossed the hard road in front of the bus, then went up and over a small hill into the woods.

Ed and Les looked at each other. Without saying a word, they knew what the drill would be for the next day.

At first light the sluggish black creek looked like a newly paved road. Each hunter set out on opposite sides of the creek, Ed at one end of the hollow, Les at the other. It was steep and rugged, an obstacle course of rock outcroppings and laurel. The plan was to move alternately at 20-minute intervals, slowly weaving up to the lip of the hollow then down.

The hunters moved like molasses on cold slate. On the third cycle several deer trotted by each hunter, and by the fifth, the deer had wised up, and were running harder. At the last cycle, when the hunters were directly across from each other, Les heard some splashing, then a shot. Les watched Ed slide down the slope and disappear into heavy cover.



"He's a nice one, Les! C'mon up."

Ed held up the head of the strapping 8-pointer. "He came sneaking right up the chute of this deer trail, and I got him at less than 30 yards. Boy, these farm deer are sneaky. I told you to take this side of the hollow."

"This is a fine buck, but it's not him," said Les. "This deer has dark antlers, the big boy has yellow antlers and a wider spread. I saw where his antler tips poked into the snow where he was picking up acorns."

"That's great," said Ed.

"Why's that?"

"We get to hunt him again tomorrow."

THE NEXT DAY THEY headed back to the thicket, with Ed doing all the grunt work. Ed was bulldog tough. He pushed out cover after cover while Les posted near funnels, stood on rises and watched at the edges of pastures. At day's end Les took a large doe.

On the way home they stopped for steaks at their favorite diner. Ed ordered his rare, and Les requested his well-done. When the waitress uncovered their sizzling platters all that was on Ed's plate was a big soup bone.

The waitress patted Ed on the head. "Les said you were a good dog today, Eddie, and since it was his treat, he wanted us to fix you something special."

The following morning they returned to the hollow and Ed filled his antlerless tag on the third drive. Both the hollow and thicket were covered with their tracks and those of fleeing deer. The deer were getting used to their patterns, but this was part of

the plan. Predictability and pressure became an ally, a third party in the hunt. No buck would tolerate the endless passages of hunters time and again; he would head for that odd spot; a place deep, or distant, or incidental.

ON THE LAST DAY Les was carrying Ed's beanfield rifle; a flat-shooting 7mm STW instead of his own .35 Remington pump. He could reach out with the beanfield rifle if the buck broke cover and headed out into a pasture.

Ed ghosted past weed-choked foundations, pushed out an acre of dense pines, and scoured every windfall and blackberry-choked gully. Together they glassed hillsides. Les was ever-watchful, and had to admit that he felt confident with the racy rifle in his hands.



IT BEGAN TO SNOW lightly and the wind picked up. They stopped to eat lunch on an oak that had fallen into a field. After eating they rested, luxuriating in the afterglow of a week in the winter woods. Les rested his weary eyes, then nodded off.

Ed took the penny game out of a pocket. He steered the rabbit past the fox and dogs, over a wall and through the woods, past one hunter, over a creek, then past the second hunter and home to its burrow in the weed patch. For a full minute he looked around, rubbing his chin, then his eyes narrowed.

"Let's go," Ed said. "I have an idea."

They walked down through the pine woods, then a quarter mile up a tram road on the other side of the hill. They hiked up and over the hilltop where the trees thinned into heavily browsed scrub on a high slope. The oak where they ate lunch was two fields below.

"Wait here," said Ed. "And be ready."

Les glassed the edges of the fields with binoculars, then picked up Ed walking out into the next field down. Ed stopped and Les followed his partner's gaze uphill to a crescent-shaped patch of goldenrod and staghorn sumac at the confluence of three fields.

When Ed's scent hit the patch a buck stood up, then started to sneak away. It was a 200-yard shot. Les cranked up the scope to 12x, planted the rifle on top of a fencepost, snugged into the cheekpiece and squeezed the trigger.

They reached the buck at the same time. It was a tremendous 11-point, the buck of a lifetime. "The rabbit was in the weed patch," said Ed, pumping Les's hand.

Ed surveyed the countryside while Les dressed out the buck. "You know what I hope, Les? I hope next year we have an early frost so we can hunt together sooner."

"We can do whatever we want," said Les. "You're the one who came up with that dumb tradition."

"Wasn't me," said Ed. "You're the one who likes the traditional stuff."

Each hunter grabbed an antler and began pulling in opposite directions, debating at length then about the easiest route back.



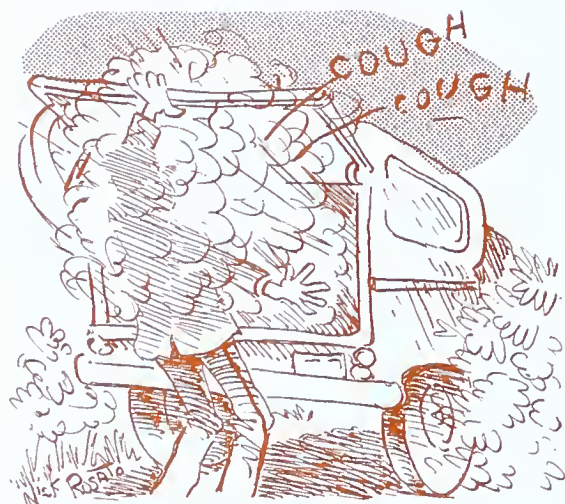
FIELD NOTES



Dreams Do Come True

Several years ago a young man visited the Game Commission display at Shippensburg University during a "career day" program, and said that his goal was to become a WCO. Soon after, he volunteered to work for the PGC as an intern, became a temporary employee, and later a full-time surveyor technician. Then, finally, he got his opportunity to achieve his goal. Congratulations WCO Kris Krebs.

— PUBLIC LANDS BIOLOGIST, TONY ROSS,
HARRISBURG



Hard to Convince

MIFFLIN — While driving down a road after loading a couple thousand seedlings and some wood duck boxes for cooperators in our public access programs, I heard a hissing sound coming from inside my truck cap. I didn't think much about it until I reached my first destination and opened the hatch. A cloud of yellow dust poured from the back of the truck, as somehow the pin on my fire extinguisher had worked loose and a wood duck box had wedged in the handle, setting it off. I had to explain to each landowner that the yellow residue was not some type of fungicide.

— WCO JEFFREY G. MOCK, LEWISTOWN

Universal Language

BERKS — I was doing a program about furbearers at a school in the Reading School District, which had quite a few youngsters from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, so there was a small language barrier problem. When I pulled the skunk pelt out of my bag, however, every student smiled and immediately placed their hands over their noses.

— WCO DAVID BROCKMEIER, MOHNTON

Moving Through or Moving In?

According to reliable sources, two different bears were spotted in northern York County in March.

— WCO AMY B. GLADFELTER, SOUTHEAST
REGION OFFICE, READING

All's Well that Ends Well

NORTHAMPTON — In the 1997 December *Game News* I wrote a Field Note about a Paul Roche who was from Ireland, soon to be wed to a gal from the Lehigh Valley, and how he explained that his first love was hunting and that Pennsylvania had endless opportunities. When I was recently working our display at the Klecknersville Sports Show I met Paul again, and he informed me that his wife-to-be in 1997 read that Field Note and demanded an explanation about his true love. The good news is that Paul is happily married, still hunts, but is now careful of what he says to game wardens.

— WCO BRADLEY D. KREIDER, CHERRYVILLE

Commendable

I want to thank members of the Shade Mountain Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation for their ongoing habitat work on SGL 107 in Juniata County. Among other things, they've maintained several herbaceous openings and planted crabapple and chestnut trees.

— LMO STEVEN BERNARDI, PENNS CREEK

Stay Out of Town

CLEARFIELD — Bears are not usually a problem in January, but because of the warm weather I trapped one that had been frequenting a birdfeeder in a residential area. About the same time a fox trapper accidentally caught a fisher, and I released it near the same residential area. I just hope both animals don't decide to take up permanent residence.

— WCO DAVID L. STEWART, DuBOIS

Window Shopper

I was sitting at the traffic light in Sandy Lake one morning when I noticed a turkey crossing the street toward the drug store. I decided that I had better escort the bird out of town for its own safety, but it ran around the corner and circled the bank as I pursued. When the bird made it to the grocery store, I realized I wasn't going to catch it, so I decided the bird would just have to leave on its own.

— LMO JAMES E. DENIKER, SANDY LAKE

Transparent

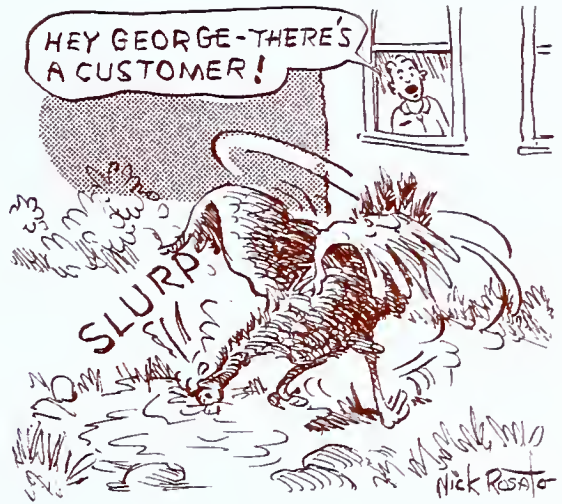
MONTGOMERY — I noticed a large groundhog on the edge of a field with its head stuck inside a large plastic pickle jar. Over the years I've helped several animals that had their heads stuck inside of cans, and it was always easy because they couldn't see my approach. The plastic jar, however, enabled the groundhog to see me. A chase ensued and I was able to capture the groundhog only because the jar was too big to fit down its burrow. Another thing: While trying to get the jar off its head, I was able to see what big teeth it had.

— WCO J. CHRISTOPHER HEIL, COLLEGEVILLE

Bountiful Harvest

MERCER — Beaver trappers did extremely well last winter, particularly in some of our nuisance areas, because of the open water throughout the season. The cooperation between PGC officers, landowners and trappers worked to everyone's benefit.

— WCO DONALD G. CHAYBIN, GREENVILLE



Too Hot To Handle

PIKE — When my Food & Cover crew and I refused to eat DCNR foreman George Decker's spicy venison jerky, he threw some out behind our building to see if any wild critters would eat it. The only taker was a turkey vulture, and we thought if anything would eat George's jerky, it would. Apparently, the stuff was too much for even the vulture, because each time it nibbled some, it quickly shuffled over to a nearby puddle to get a drink.

— WCO ROBERT JOHNSON, MATAMORAS

A Mouthful

VENANGO — I was apprehending an individual who shot at our deer decoy from his vehicle when a hunter in another vehicle pulled up behind the shooter. The driver had a look of disdain on his face, and I thought he was going to chew me out for disrupting his hunt, but he said, "Good for you officer! It's about time you caught some of these #@!* road hunters."

— WCO LEONARD C. HRIBAR, OIL CITY

Super Bill Strikes Again

CENTRE — After WCO Bill Bower retired I thought there would be a better chance of getting a Field Note published, but then I noticed in the March issue a Note from "WCO Bill Bower, Retired." I now realize that we mere mortals will have to find our own kryptonite.

— WCO ERIC L. SETH, SNOWSHOE

Cooperation

BEDFORD — River otters have returned to the Juniata River basin through the reintroduction efforts of many partners. I'd like to especially thank the private landowners who so graciously allowed the groups responsible for the program, and the public, to witness the historic event on their properties.

— WCO JIM TROMBETTO, NEW ENTERPRISE

Good Sign

FOREST — I was checking embryos of roadkilled does when I found a fawn from last year carrying a fawn, which is a first for me here in this county. This deer was killed next to a large reverting clearcut, indicating that good habitat is the key to a healthy deer herd.

— WCO RICHARD T. CRAMER, TIONESTA

Encouraging

LANCASTER — After only a few weeks in my new district I'm amazed at the vast number of people I've met who volunteer their time to protect and promote Pennsylvania's hunting and trapping heritage. This dedication and enthusiasm is admirable as well as contagious.

— WCO JONATHAN S. ZUCK, LANCASTER

Good Advice

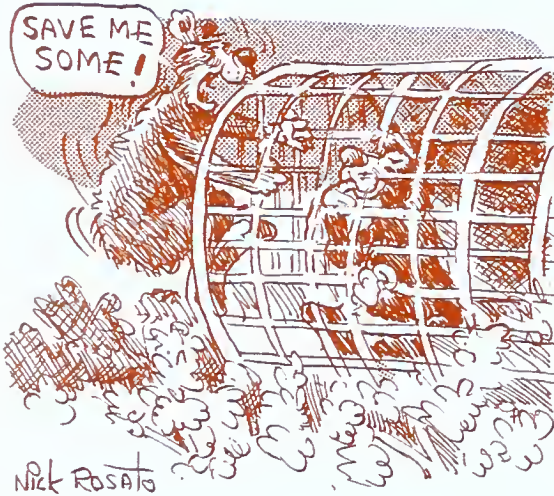
PERRY — Domestic cats can be extremely effective predators and can definitely impact local wildlife populations. Pet owners can make a difference by putting the "house cat" back in the house.

— WCO STEVE HOWER, MILLERSTOWN

What Comes Around . . .

BERKS — I had to chuckle when I read the Field Note in the February issue by an Erie County WCO whose trainee fell into a beaver pond. It reminded me of the time when I was a probationary officer and was patrolling the Schuylkill River with this same WCO. We had come to a place in the river where he decided we should carry the canoe down a slippery dam breast. Halfway down he lost his footing and started to slide and fall, but at the last minute caught himself and saved his equipment from falling into the river. We were then paddling downriver when I heard a splash, and the WCO started a frantic back paddle. It seems he dropped his newly issued portable radio into the river. With some luck we retrieved the radio, dried it out and were surprised that it still worked. Don't worry, Darin, I won't tell which Erie County WCO it was.

— DEPUTY RAYMOND SCHELL, KUTZTOWN



Readin' Too Much Into It

MONROE — After I captured a nuisance bear, an individual asked if the other bear that came by later and climbed up onto the trap was trying to get its friend out. I told him that although bears are intelligent animals, it probably just wanted to get in the trap to finish off the donuts before the other bear did.

— WCO PETER F. SUSSENBACH, BLAKESLEE

Movin' Out

Late last March my wife and I spotted a bear in a field along Interstate 80. We pulled off the road and watched as the big female carried a cub in its mouth and had two cubs plodding along behind. The cubs appeared to weigh only about six or seven pounds, and it probably was their first trek outside the den. I suspect that due to recent heavy rains, perhaps the bears' den had flooded, forcing them to seek out a new site.

— I & E SUPERVISOR DANIEL E. MARKS,
NORTHCENTRAL REGION OFFICE



Open to All

BEAVER — My mother was watching birds at her feeder when a small hawk swooped down and snatched up a songbird. She commented that she didn't want hawks at her birdfeeder, but I told her there isn't a sign that specifies the type of birds that can feed there.

— WCO TRAVIS ANDERSON, ALIQUIPPA

That's Obvious

BEDFORD — I really enjoy doing wildlife programs at the elementary schools, because of the interesting comments and questions I get from the kids. Here are just some of the ones I received at Breezewood Elementary School: Do dolphins live in Pennsylvania? Did a bear attack you, yet? Are porcupine quills poisonous? Why do coyotes howl at the moon? Do you think all kids should like wildlife? Do you like coming to our school?

— WCO DAN YAHNER, EVERETT

Wore Out Its Welcome

GREENE — The ring-necked pheasant that flew up on the railing of my deck each morning to feed at the birdfeeder was quite entertaining during the winter. Since the arrival of spring, however, the rooster doubles as an alarm clock by his crowing, and his constant racket at first light has diminished his popularity with the late sleepers in my family.

— WCO ROD BURNS, WAYNESBURG

"Roadrunner"

FOREST — One day early last spring I topped a hill on a blacktop road and had to slam on my brakes so I wouldn't hit two strutting gobblers. They immediately ran into the woods, but as I continued to drive I noticed one of the toms running parallel to my vehicle. When I stopped, the gobbler kept running as if crossing an imaginary finish line. I wonder if gobblers are now resorting to footraces to impress hens.

— WCO DANIEL P. SCHMIDT, WEST HICKORY

Gettin' Out of Town

UNION — When Millmont resident Brad Catherman opened the door and stepped inside his woodshed he noticed a hawk perched on his wood pile. He immediately jumped out and slammed the door, but when he opened it a crack to see what kind of hawk it was, the bird made a dash for the opening and brushed right by his face. How the hawk got in the woodshed is anybody's guess.

— WCO BERNARD J. SCHMADER, MILLMONT



Real World

LUZERNE — Now that I'm out of the training school I don't have anyone telling me what I'm going to be doing each minute of every day. More important, though, I've realized rather quickly how important it was to take detailed notes, and which classes I slept through.

— WCO DAVID ALLEN, MOUNTAINTOP

Be Careful What You Wish For

ELK — After pursuing and finally stopping a group of ATV riders on a game lands here, I had one individual comment that the Game Commission should get with the times and start charging people to ride on game lands. Well, they all left with their bills, in the form of citations, for that day's ride.

— WCO RICHARD S. BODENHORN, RIDGWAY



Bigfoot or Just Big Feet?

ADAMS — Deputies Ron Sadler, Bob Flohr and I were following up on a report of some large tracks supposedly made by "Bigfoot" in the muddy bottom of the unusually low Waynesboro Reservoir when Bob sank to his knees in the mud and couldn't get out. It seemed like it was he who had the big feet, and only after a few embarrassing moments and torn boots was he able to crawl out of his predicament on hands and knees. As for Bigfoot, well, that's still a mystery.

— WCO LARRY HAYNES, GETTYSBURG

Family Outing

POTTER — My deputy and I recently watched four bobcats hunting at the edge of a forest. The large female was diligently zigzagging through the field, searching for rodents, while her three nearly grown kittens were frolicking back and forth.

— WCO DENISE H. MITCHELTREE,
CROSS FORKS

Elusive

JUNIATA — Field Note material can be hard to come by at times, and then they can be hard to get published because of the selection process. If you see or hear something interesting in relation to wildlife or hunting, feel free to pass it along to your local WCO. Field Notes are the first thing most readers turn to when they get their new *Game News*, and it's always a thrill for an officer to see his or her Note in print.

— WCO DANIEL I. CLARK, HONEY GROVE

Look Before You Leap

MONTOUR/NORTHUMBERLAND — I issued a warning to a young man for operating a motorized dirt bike on one of our Farm-Game projects, and explained to him the damage these machines cause on fields in the spring when the ground is soft. His parents were grateful that I had issued a warning instead of fining their son, but a month later I cited the same juvenile for operating an ATV on the same property. The boy's father told me they had just purchased the ATV for about \$7,000, and he wanted to know where all the trails were on the game lands he had been told about. Please, do your homework and locate places to ride these machines before you buy them.

— WCO RANDY SHOUP, DANVILLE

Close

LYCOMING — When I asked some Tiger Scouts what the soft covering on deer antlers is called and said it begins with VEL, one eager youngster yelled out Velcro.

— WCO RICHARD E. MACKLEM,
JERSEY SHORE

Fair Warning

TIOGA — Neighboring WCO John Snyder retired in March after 32 years of service, and I'm sure going to miss not being able to pick on him. I sure hope his replacement, WCO Rodney Mee, has a sense of humor; he's going to need it.

— WCO RICHARD J. SHIRE,
MIDDLEBURY CENTER

Game Commission approves 2002-03 seasons and bags and antler restrictions

THE 2002-03 seasons and bag limits approved by the Board of Game Commissioners at its April meeting include new antler restrictions, a second elk hunt, expanded bear hunting opportunities in the Pocono Mountains, and a youth pheasant hunt.

Following a lengthy debate, the Board approved deer hunting seasons and bag limits for 2002-03 that include a modified version of the antler restrictions proposed in January. In approving the 2002-03 antlerless license allocations, the Board also revived the private land only antlerless license.

Under the plan, approved by a vote of 4-3, antler restrictions are broken down into four categories:

- In a 10-county area of western Pennsylvania, hunters will be required to abide by a 4-point on one side antler restriction. Those counties are: Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Crawford, Erie, Indiana, Lawrence, Mercer, Washington and Westmoreland;
- In the six Special Regulations Area counties (Allegheny, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia) the previous antler restrictions of one antler three or more inches in length or one antler with at least two points apply;
- In all other counties, hunters will be required to abide by a 3-point on one side antler restriction; and
- Statewide, all junior license holders, disabled hunters with a per-

mit to use a vehicle, and active duty U.S. Armed Services personnel will be able to abide by the previous antler restrictions of one antler of three or more inches in length or one antler with at least two points.

Also, the proposal given preliminary approval in January to allow junior hunters to use their general license tag to take an antlerless deer in any county of the state was rejected.

"By increasing the number of points required to be legal," said Dr. Gary Alt, "we will protect a significant percentage of younger bucks. This should increase the number of bucks living at least one more year and, in the long term, hunters will likely see more and larger bucks than ever before.

"To suggest that antler restrictions are just about 'trophy hunting' is false. The issue is much more important than that. By increasing the number and the age of bucks, a much more natural breeding ecology will be established, one where dominant bucks compete for breeding rights rather than any buck, regardless of age."

The Board also gave final approval to define a "point" as "an antler projection at least one inch in length from base to tip, the brow tine and main beam tip shall be counted as points regardless of length." Also, the Board gave final approval to define "protected deer" as "a deer not defined as an antlered deer or antlerless deer."

THE BOARD gave preliminary approval to a regulatory change that will clarify what happens to a hunter who kills a buck that doesn't meet the antler point requirement.

As proposed, if a hunter kills a deer that is either protected or out of season, the animal must be tagged before it is moved. The mistake kill should be reported as soon as possible, but no later than 12 hours after the time of kill, to the region office serving the county in which the deer was harvested. This is in addition to current law that requires the hunter to immediately remove all entrails and deliver the entire carcass to any Commission officer in the county in which killed and making a written sworn statement explaining when, where and how the accident or mistake occurred. The hunter will be required to pay \$25 restitution. This proposal must be approved at a subsequent Board meeting before taking effect.

An antlerless deer will remain defined as "a deer without antlers, or a deer with antlers both of which are less than three inches in length."

Following is an overview of the approved seasons.

- Concurrent rifle deer season from Dec. 2-14. To take antlerless deer during the concurrent seasons, hunters must possess a valid antlerless deer license for the county in which they are hunting.

- A firearms antlerless deer season from Oct. 24-26, for junior and senior license holders, Disabled Person Permit (to use a vehicle) holders, and Pennsylvania residents serving on active duty in the U.S. Armed Ser-

vices. An appropriate county-specific antlerless deer license is required. Also included are persons who have reached or will reach age 65 in the year of the application for a license and hold a valid adult license, or qualify for license and fee exemptions under section 2706.

- A muzzleloader season for antlerless deer from Oct. 19-26, with an antlerless deer license. The flintlock season, set for Dec. 26-Jan. 11, remains an antlered or antlerless season, provided the hunter possesses the appropriate licenses.

- Archery seasons will be Oct. 5-Nov. 16, and from Dec. 26-Jan. 11.

- In addition to the statewide concurrent rifle deer seasons, an antlerless deer season in the Special Regulations Area counties (Allegheny, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia) will be Dec. 26-Jan. 11.

Based on the need to increase the antlerless harvest to compensate for the approximately 85,000 antlered deer expected to be protected by the new antler restrictions, an antlerless license allocation of 1,029,350, including Special Regulation Areas, was approved.

The Board also gave preliminary approval to re-establish the private land antlerless deer licenses. Like in 2000-01, private land only tags will become available in any county with unsold antlerless licenses as of Aug. 26. Private land only tags also may be used on publicly owned lands with a deer management plan that has been approved by the Game Commission. This private land license provision must be given final approval at the June meeting before taking effect.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

Antlerless License Allocation For 2002-03

(Figures in parenthesis are 2001-02 allocations.)

Northwest Region: Butler, 22,400 (17,400); Clarion, 13,700 (9,400); Crawford, 21,200 (14,000); Erie, 14,300 (11,200); Forest, 13,500 (10,400); Jefferson, 17,400 (13,100); Lawrence, 7,000 (4,700); Mercer, 12,900 (7,200); Venango, 19,000 (12,800); and Warren, 22,200 (16,000).

Southwest Region: Allegheny, 34,000 (32,000); Armstrong, 22,000 (12,200); Beaver, 13,100 (13,000); Cambria, 12,800 (11,500); Fayette, 13,500 (12,100); Greene, 19,100 (16,800); Indiana, 22,000 (16,400); Somerset, 17,600 (12,000); Washington, 31,900 (28,600); and Westmoreland, 29,000 (22,900).

Northcentral Region: Cameron, 4,200 (3,600); Centre, 22,800 (16,300); Clearfield, 24,200 (17,700); Clinton, 9,000 (6,000); Elk, 14,100 (7,800); Lycoming, 23,500 (15,800); McKean, 18,000 (13,100); Potter, 20,300 (14,300); Tioga, 23,900 (14,600); and Union, 4,700 (3,400).

Southcentral Region: Adams, 12,800 (12,400); Bedford, 23,200 (15,300); Blair, 12,800 (10,400); Cumberland, 10,700 (9,000); Franklin, 14,900 (9,900); Fulton, 11,100 (9,000); Huntingdon, 21,300 (17,200); Juniata, 6,900 (5,500); Mifflin, 7,500 (5,200); Perry, 14,600 (10,800); and Snyder, 5,300 (4,000).

Northeast Region: Bradford, 25,600 (20,000); Carbon, 7,300 (4,200); Columbia, 12,700 (12,300); Lackawanna, 6,700 (5,800); Luzerne, 19,500 (14,000); Monroe, 12,500 (8,000); Montour, 2,800 (2,000); Northumberland, 8,700 (7,000); Pike, 13,600 (9,500); Sullivan, 8,800 (5,300); Susquehanna, 15,600 (14,000); Wayne, 14,200 (12,600); and Wyoming, 8,000 (5,300).

Southeast Region: Berks, 26,200 (18,400); Bucks, 24,000 (20,000); Chester, 26,000 (20,000); Dauphin, 9,800 (8,500); Delaware, 7,000 (5,000); Lancaster, 10,000 (8,000); Lebanon, 6,300 (4,700); Lehigh, 9,300 (6,100); Montgomery, 15,000 (10,000); Northampton, 8,200 (7,400); Philadelphia, 750 (750); Schuylkill, 18,400 (14,700); and York, 28,000 (21,700).

New bear season approved to address conflicts

TO ADDRESS the growing human-bear conflicts in the northeast, a second bear season, Dec. 2-7 (first week of concurrent rifle deer seasons), has been set for Pike, Monroe and Carbon counties. This season is in addition to the regular statewide bear season, Nov. 25-27.

"This new season aims to resolve

bear problems at the source," said Mark Ternent, PGC bear biologist. "We recognize that a larger bear harvest may not solve this area's problem. But this approach should provide relief to residents, and it provides hunters a chance to pursue deer and bear at the same time."

This proposal has the potential to

substantially increase bear harvests in this tri-county area. In 2001, 303 bears were taken in Pike, Carbon and Monroe counties, down from the 345

taken in 2000.

For additional information refer to News Release 81-01, in the "Newsroom" on the agency's website.

Elk and bobcat opportunities continue

PENNSYLVANIA'S second modern-day elk season will pretty much mirror the format used last November, when 27 of 30 elk hunters filled their tags. The 2002 elk season will be Nov. 18-23.

After giving final approval to a regulatory language change that clarifies elk license allocations will be set by the Board, Commissioners set the number of elk licenses for 2002 at 70 (36 antlered and 34 antlerless), and up to five may go to nonresidents. Successful applicants will be selected through a public drawing scheduled for Saturday, Sept. 28. The Board also reduced the number of elk management areas from 15 to 12.

Similar to last year, hunters will be able to apply for elk licenses through the mail or by going to the agency's website. All applications must be accompanied by a nonrefundable \$10

application fee. This year, the Game Commission will earmark the first 10,000 application fees (\$100,000) for habitat improvement in the elk range. (See News Release 102-01 in the "Newsroom" on the agency's website.)

Final approval also was given to the state's third consecutive bobcat season. For 2002-03, Pennsylvania resident hunters and trappers with a bobcat permit may harvest one bobcat in either Furbearer Management Zone 2 or 3. The bobcat hunting season will start Oct. 19, and end Feb. 22, 2003. The trapping season will be Oct. 20 through Feb. 22, 2003.

Successful permit holders will be determined through a public drawing on Friday, Sept. 13. The number of permits will be determined at a later date. Applications will be accepted through the mail and over the Game Commission's website.

Youth pheasant season highlights upland game hunting changes

A NEW YOUTH pheasant hunting season aimed to expand hunting opportunities for young hunters highlights the slate of 2002-03 seasons and bag limits for small game and wild turkeys. The new youth pheasant season will be held concurrently with the junior squirrel hunt, Oct. 12 and 14. It was developed by the Youth Pheasant Hunting Committee, chaired by Lori Richardson, PGC Outreach Coordinator.

"Holding concurrent youth seasons for squirrels and pheasants will offer variety to young hunters who participate in these small game hunting opportunities," Richardson said.

Prior to the 2-day season, 13,560 pheasants will be released on 75,000 acres open to public hunting. Hunters, however, are not limited to hunting in only those areas where pheasants have been stocked. The pheasant stocking locations are in the Penn-

sylvania Digest of Hunting and Trapping Regulations, as well as on the agency's website.

"The future of hunting is directly related to the continuing participation of young Pennsylvanians," noted Vern Ross, Game Commission executive director. "The challenge is to successfully compete with all the other activities and recreational opportunities that vie for a teenager's time. It's

truly a challenge for the Game Commission, as well as Pennsylvania's more than a million hunters."

For more information on the development of this youth pheasant hunting season, please refer to Game Commission News Release 81-01, in the "Newsroom" of the agency's website.

Following is a complete list of all seasons and bag limits approved for 2002-03.

2002-03 hunting seasons and bag limits

Squirrels, Red, Gray, Black and Fox (combined): Special season for eligible junior hunters, with or without required license - Oct. 12-14 (6 daily, 12 in possession limit after first day).

Squirrels, Red, Gray, Black and Fox (combined): Fall Season - Oct. 19-Nov. 30; Late Seasons - Dec. 16-24, and Dec. 26-Feb. 8, 2003 (6 daily, 12 in possession).

Ruffed Grouse: Oct. 19-Nov. 30, Dec. 16-24 and Dec. 26-Jan. 11, 2003 (2 daily, 4 possession). There is no open season for ruffed grouse in that portion of SGL 176 in Centre County which is posted "RESEARCH AREA - NO GROUSE HUNTING."

Rabbit (Cottontail): Nov. 2-30, Dec. 16-24 and Dec. 26-Feb. 8, 2003 (4 daily, 8 possession).

Pheasant: Special season for eligible junior hunters, with or without required license - Oct. 12-14 (2 daily, 4 in possession).

Pheasant: Male Only - Nov. 2-30. Male and female in designated areas - Nov. 2-30, Dec. 16-24 and Dec. 26-Feb. 8, 2003 (2 daily, 4 possession).

Bobwhite Quail: Nov. 2-30 (4 daily, 8 possession). (Closed in Adams, Chester, Cumberland, Dauphin, Delaware, Franklin, Fulton, Juniata, Lancaster, Lebanon, Perry, Snyder and York counties.)

Hares (snowshoe rabbits): Dec. 26-Jan. 1, 2003 (1 daily, 2 possession).

Woodchucks (groundhogs): No closed season except during the antlered and antlerless deer seasons and until noon daily during the spring gobbler season.

Crows: July 5-Dec. 1, and Dec. 27-April 6, 2003, on Friday, Saturday and Sunday only. No limit.

Starlings and English Sparrows: No closed season except during the antlered and antlerless deer seasons and until noon daily during the spring gobbler season. No limit.

Wild Turkey (male or female): Management Areas 1A, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7A & 8 -Nov. 2-23; Area 1B - Nov. 2-16; Area 7B- Nov. 4-9; Area 9B -Nov. 2-9; and Area 9A - Closed to Fall Turkey Hunting. (1 bird limit, either sex).

Spring Gobbler (bearded bird only): April 26, 2003 - May 24, 2003. (1 bird limit)

Black Bear (statewide): Nov. 25-27; and, in Carbon, Monroe and Pike counties, Dec. 2-7. One bear per hunting license year.

Elk (Antlered or Antlerless): Nov. 18-23. Daily and season limit: one.

Deer Statewide*

Archery (Antlered and Antlerless): Oct. 5-Nov. 16 and Dec. 26-Jan. 11, 2003. One antlered deer per hunting license year. One antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Deer (Antlered and Antlerless): Dec. 2-14. One antlered deer per hunting license year. An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Antlerless Deer: Oct. 24-26. Junior and Senior License Holders, Disabled Person Permit (to use a vehicle) Holders, and Pennsylvania residents serving on active duty in the U.S. Armed Services or in the U.S. Coast Guard only, with required antlerless license. Also included are persons who have reached or will reach their 65th birthday in the year of the application for a license and hold a valid adult license, or qualify for license and fee exemptions. One antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Deer, Antlerless Muzzleloader: Oct. 19-26. An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Deer, Antlered or Antlerless Flintlock: Dec. 26-Jan. 11, 2003. One antlered deer per hunting license year, or one antlerless deer and an additional antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Deer, Antlerless (military bases): Hunting permitted on days established by the U.S. Department of the Army at Letterkenny Army Depot, Franklin County; New Cumberland Army Depot, York County; and Fort Detrick, Raven Rock Site, Adams County. An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Deer, Special Regulations Areas: Allegheny, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia counties:*

Archery (bow and arrows only #) Antlered and Antlerless Oct. 5-Nov. 16, and Dec. 26-Jan. 11, 2003. One antlered deer per hunting license year. An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license. Preliminary approval was given by the Board to allow the use of crossbows in this season. (# - *This provision must be approved at the Board's June meeting before taking effect.*)

Deer, Antlered Dec. 2-14. One antlered deer per hunting license year.

Deer, Antlerless Dec. 2-14 and Dec. 26 - Jan. 11, 2003. An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

*note antler restrictions, beginning on page 35

Furbearer Seasons

Hunting

Raccoon & Foxes: Oct. 19-Feb. 22, 2003, unlimited.

Coyote, Opossum, Skunks & Weasels: No closed season, with certain exceptions during any deer and bear seasons. No limits.

Bobcat (Furbearer Management Zones 2 and 3): Oct. 19-Feb. 22, 2003.

One per permit. (Bobcats may be taken only by furtakers in possession of a Bobcat Hunting-Trapping permit.)

Trapping

Mink & Muskrat: Nov. 23-Jan. 11, 2003. Unlimited.

Coyote, Foxes, Opossum, Raccoon, Skunks, Weasels: Oct. 20-Feb. 22, 2003. No limit.

Beaver (Statewide): Dec. 26-March 31, 2003 (Limits vary depending on Furbearer Management Zone).

Bobcat (Furbearer Management Zones 2 and 3): Oct. 20-Feb. 22, 2003. One per permit. (Bobcats may be taken only by furtakers in possession of a Bobcat Hunting-Trapping permit.)

Falconry Seasons

Squirrels (combined), Quail, Ruffed Grouse, Cottontail Rabbits, Snowshoe or Varying Hare, Ringneck Pheasant (male or female combined): Sept. 1-March 31, 2003. Daily and field possession limits vary.

Game lands use regs finalized

FOLLOWING more than a year of public comment and discussion, the Board of Game Commissioners unanimously approved several changes in State Game Lands use regulations to better protect these wild places from misuse and degradation. The regulations will take effect Feb. 1, 2003.

Since giving preliminary approval to the regulatory changes on Jan. 15, the Board incorporated an amendment to extend by two weeks when mountain bikers and horseback riders may access designated routes on state game lands in September.

Under the adopted provision, except for on Sundays or roads open to public travel, riders would not be permitted to access designated routes from the last Saturday in September until the third Saturday in January. (As originally proposed, access would have been restricted beginning the second Saturday in September.)

A second amendment also allows such riders to access designated routes beginning at 1 p.m. from the second Saturday in April to the last Satur-

day in May, except for on Sundays or on roads open to public travel. As originally proposed, riders would not be permitted on designated routes during this timeframe.

A third amendment included in the final package would require non-hunting users of state game lands to wear fluorescent orange from Nov. 15 through Dec. 15, except on Sundays. This one-month timeframe includes the bear and regular firearms deer seasons. Hunters also are required to display at least 250 square inches of fluorescent orange in each season.

"As more and more people seek to enjoy the great outdoors, state game lands have come under increased pressure from general recreational users," said Vern Ross. "Because our regulations did not address certain non-traditional recreational activities, such as horseback riding or mountain bike riding, we were unable to properly manage this increased use. And, in many cases, this unrestricted use has led to degradation or destruction of wildlife habitats, disruption of nest-

ing or wintering wildlife, and conflicts with hunting seasons.

“These new regulations will provide common-sense guidelines, so that alternative uses of state game lands may continue in a manner that does not conflict with our legislatively mandated mission to protect and manage Pennsylvania’s wild birds and mammals and to develop, conserve and preserve critical wildlife habitats.”

Under the regulations given final approval, except with written permission of the Executive Director:

- No one may remove any manmade or natural object, except wildlife and fish lawfully taken during open seasons, from state game lands. Objects that may not be removed include, but are not limited to, animals, rocks, minerals, sand and historical or archaeological artifacts. Under a recently enacted law, this regulation does not pertain to shed antlers from elk or deer;

- As long as the fire index rating maintained by DCNR is acceptable, anyone who builds a fire for warming or cooking purposes on state game lands must prevent the spread of the fire, attend to the fire at all times, and completely extinguish the fire before leaving the site. A person causing a wildfire, in addition to possible criminal penalty and fines, is liable for damages and costs of extinguishing the fire;

- Anyone who rides a non-motorized vehicle, conveyance or animal on state game lands must do so only on designated routes. Such riding activities will not be permitted, except on Sundays or on roads open to public travel, from the last Saturday in September to the third Saturday in January, and after 1 p.m. from the second Saturday in April to the last Saturday in May. This does not apply to

anyone lawfully engaged in hunting, trapping or fishing;

- The Game Commission will designate routes for riding non-motorized vehicles, conveyances or animals according to compatibility with the management plan for each state game lands. The public also may request the agency to consider other route designations;

- No one may use state game lands for personal, organization or commercial purposes other than the intended uses. Commercial activities include any activity in which a person directly or indirectly accepts consideration or value as compensation for the provision of goods or services, including transportation;

- No one may feed wildlife or put out any food, fruit, hay, grain, chemical, salt or other minerals intended for wildlife;

- No one may release any domestic animals, or captive-bred or captive-raised game or wildlife on state game lands;

- No one may consume, possess or transport alcoholic beverages or controlled substances on state game lands;

- No one may operate a motor vehicle on state game lands in willful and wanton disregard for the safety of others or property, in excess of speed limits, or 25 miles per hour in areas where no limit is posted;

- No one may target shoot with firearms, bows and arrows, or devices capable of launching projectiles in a manner that could cause injury to persons or property or in areas posted closed to such activities. Also, except on ranges, no one shall discharge any firearm, bow and arrow, or device capable of launching projectiles on state game lands that is not a lawful device to hunt game and wildlife; and

- No one may participate in an organized activity or event involving

more than 10 persons, except for hunting or trapping. This would not apply to those activities that are not in conflict with the intended uses or purposes of state game lands or those activities that do not pose a potential environmental or safety problem.

Also, those not engaged in hunting, trapping or fishing on state game lands from Nov. 15 through Dec. 15, except Sundays, must wear a minimum of 250 square inches of fluorescent orange on head, chest or back combined or, in lieu thereof, a hat.

Board takes action on three land proposals

THE BOARD approved a land purchase proposal for a 30-acre interior holding on SGL 283 in Clarion County. The agency will purchase the tract from the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy for \$65,000 with no reservations.

The appraised value of the property is \$170,000, which makes the agency's \$2,167 per acre purchase price consistent with state law that allows the agency to exceed its \$400 per acre ceiling for what it considers a fair and reasonable price for interior holdings.

Additionally, the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy received a \$90,000 Growing Greener Grant toward the acquisition of this parcel.

"By ensuring Game Commission ownership of this interior holding, we are guaranteeing that this critical portion of SGL 283 will not be developed," said Vern Ross, Game Commission executive director. "Also, the parcel contains a tributary to the Clarion River, along with several springs, and provides additional public access to SGL 283."

In other action, the Board voted to reverse its April 10, 2001, approval of the purchase of 1,425 acres in Pike County from the Wildlands Conservancy for \$569,920. The tract was originally purchased by the Wildlands Conservancy for \$650 per acre from

Salvatore Checho. Since the Game Commission's purchase price exceeded \$300,000, the transaction needed to be approved by the General Assembly and Governor before being finalized.

Since last year, Checho has requested to be released from the contract because he has not been paid. However, DCNR has agreed to acquire this tract at the option price as an addition to the Delaware State Forest.

"While this tract would have been an ideal addition to the State Game Lands system, this particular property is surrounded by the Delaware State Forest," Ross said. "From an administrative view, it makes sense that DCNR makes it part of its holdings. As with other state forests, hunters and trappers still will be able to access this property."

Additionally, the Board removed an 80-acre portion of SGL 280 and Area 425 in Berks County, from its list of propagation areas. In 1970, the Board added this to its propagation areas to provide protection to a dove roost. However, as the habitat has matured, the area no longer serves as a roost. (Propagation areas are portions of state game lands that are marked as "off-limits" to all users, including hunters and trappers, to provide protection for wildlife.)

Warren County oil/gas lease approved on SGL 291

THE BOARD unanimously approved an oil and gas lease with the North Coast Energy Inc. of Youngstown, Ohio, on a 160-acre parcel of SGL 291 in Warren County.

In exchange, North Coast Energy will pay the agency a royalty rate of 17.5 percent from the well drilled within the lease area, and an annual rental rate of \$10 per acre for any undeveloped acreage. North Coast Energy also will pay a royalty rate on at least 50 percent of all gas removed from at least two additional wells on adjacent privately owned leases. In addition, North Coast Energy will adhere to the reclamation and revegetation requirements specified by the Game Commission for all future well development on SGL 291, regardless of actual gas rights ownership.

In other land management actions, the Board changed the road use status of eight PGC maintained roads to provide hunters greater access. The changes are as follows:

- In Lebanon County on SGL 80, a 0.6-mile section of road beginning at Township Route T-648 and proceeding to a parking area on SGL 80 will be open from the beginning of the archery season to the end of the extended deer season in January, and

during the spring gobbler season. This road currently is open just from the beginning of the archery season to the end of the extended deer season in January;

- In Jefferson County on SGL 31, a 6.7-mile stretch of road beginning at a parking lot along Route 236 and ending at a parking lot and gate on SGL 31 will be open during the regular small game, antlered and antlerless deer and flintlock seasons;

- In Forest County on SGL 24, a 3.1-mile section of Judy Run Road beginning at the parking area on Muzette/Vowinkel Road (SR 2007) and proceeding west to a stone pit above Big Weaver Run on SGL 24 will be open during the antlered and antlerless deer seasons. Also on SGL 24, a 1.1 mile section of Little Weaver Run Road beginning at the parking area just west of the SGL 24 boundary on Guitonville Road (SR 3004) and proceeding west to a 90-degree bend before the steep hill above Little Weaver Run will be open during the antlered and antlerless deer seasons;

- In Warren County on SGL 29, a 1.8 mile stretch of Conklin Run Road starting at the parking area at the SGL 29 boundary (one-half mile east from SR 3005 on Forest Road)

CONTACTING THE REGION OFFICES

Northwest — 877-877-0299

Southwest — 877-877-7137

Northcentral — 877-877-7674

Southcentral — 877-877-9107

Northeast — 877-877-9357

Southeast — 877-877-9470

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.

and proceeding east to the termination point at a stone pit will be open during the antlered and antlerless deer seasons;

- In Warren County on SGL 143, 2.3 mile section of a marked snowmobile route starting at a parking area at Spetz Hill (1.3 miles southwest of TR 388 at the end of TR 457) and proceeding southeast to the termination point at the crossroads on SGL 143 will be open during the antlered and antlerless deer seasons;

- In Clarion County on SGL 45,

a 1.2 mile stretch of road beginning at a parking area at the intersection of Kline Road and SR 2017 and proceeding to a logging turn around area of SGL 45 will be open during the antlered and antlerless deer seasons; and

- In Venango County on SGL 39, a 2.4 mile section of road beginning at a parking lot at the east end of T-399 (Adams Road) and proceeding in a southeast direction to a turn around point on SGL 39 will be open during the antlered and antlerless deer seasons.

Crossbows & muzzleloader proposals

THE BOARD of Game Commissioners gave preliminary approval to the use of crossbows during the statewide firearms seasons for deer, bear and elk, as well as in Special Regulations Areas during archery seasons, and to regulatory change that would allow hunters participating in the October muzzleloader antlerless deer season to use “any long gun muzzleloading firearm.” The flintlock change aims to provide hunters more options and opportunities in the early muzzleloader season.

As proposed, crossbows are not permitted to be used during the early and post-Christmas archery seasons outside Special Regulations Areas. In addition, crossbows must have a draw weight of not less than 125 pounds, nor more than 200 pounds. All crossbow bolts must be tipped with a broadhead of cutting-edge design.

Each of these proposals must be approved at a subsequent Board meeting before taking effect.

In a related move, the Board withdrew a proposal to remove the current deadline by which muzzleloader stamps must be purchased. “The muzzleloader deadline was established to limit the number of deer being har-

vested by hunters who did not hold an antlerless license,” said Cal DuBrock, Bureau of Wildlife Management director. “Antlerless licenses allow us to limit hunters to counties, particularly those where deer populations are excessive. We lose that management leverage with hunters who hold a muzzleloader license.”

In other action, the board:

- Gave final approval to definitions for “arrow,” “bow,” “broadhead,” and “crossbow bolt” under Title 58, a compilation of regulations established by the Game Commission to govern hunting, trapping and wildlife conservation. Existing, but inadequate, definitions of bowhunting words are found in the Game and Wildlife Code. The main declarations in the definitions include: 1.) Arrows shall have fletching at the aft end and a broadhead mounted on the fore end. A proposed requirement that an arrow and broadhead should have a combined weight of 400 grains was removed. 2.) Bows shall have a peak draw weight not less than 35 pounds. 3.) Broadheads shall have an outside diameter or width of at least 7/8-inch with no fewer than two cutting edges. The cutting edges must be in the same

plane throughout the length of the cutting surface. In addition, two amendments were made to the archery package. The first noted that no bow may have attached to it a "track, trough, channel or other device capable of mechanically holding a bow at full or partial draw." The second amendment stated, "The bowstring must be drawn, held and released as a direct and conscious action of the shooter" through the use of fingers or a mechanical release;

— Gave final approval to a change in regulatory language that defines when deer and bear hunters may take coyotes. Under the change, coyotes may be taken from the first to the last day inclusive of any deer or bear season only by persons who possess a valid furtaker's license and wear 250 square inches of fluorescent orange clothing from two hours before sunrise until two hours after sunset, or by persons lawfully engaged in hunting deer or bear who have a valid tag;

— Gave final approval to allow licensed furtakers to use traps to take groundhogs from Feb. 1 to Sept. 30. Traps must be set within five feet of a groundhog hole or den. This change will enable furtakers to assist farmers in dealing with nuisance groundhogs;

— Gave preliminary approval to regulatory language that clarifies the definition of "accompanying a junior hunter." Under the proposal, it would be unlawful for an adult to be out of sight of or unable to physically or verbally control the junior hunter or to fail to comply with fluorescent orange requirements. Verbal instructions given through the use of electronic or other sound amplification devices do not meet this requirement. This proposal must be approved at a subsequent Board meeting before taking effect;

— Gave preliminary approval to

add bobcats to the list of animals that may be hunted with lights. This proposal must be approved at a subsequent Board meeting before taking effect;

— Gave preliminary approval to a proposal that limits persons authorized to kill game or wildlife for crop damage to using only those firearms and types of ammunition approved by the Game Commission during hunting seasons. The proposal makes it unlawful to use bows and arrows, crossbows and bolts and muzzleloading firearms. This proposal must be approved at a subsequent Board meeting before taking effect;

— Gave preliminary approval to allow the children of a disabled person permittee to accompany the hunter when he or she is using State Game Lands roads open for disabled vehicles. The permittee may be accompanied by one or more children who hold a valid junior hunting or furtaker license. This proposal must be approved at a subsequent Board meeting before taking effect;

— Referred to committee proposed rulemaking regarding: 1.) prohibiting training dogs on wildlife in April, May, June and July; 2.) establishing mark/tagging requirements for captive deer and elk, and specific enclosure requirements; 3.) establishing experience requirements for new exotic wildlife dealer/possession and menagerie permit applicants; 4.) establishing new regulations, which include permit fees, record-keeping and enclosure requirements, for individuals and businesses that have captive cervids; and 5.) defining lawful devices for hunting small game;

— Withdrew tentatively approved rulemaking to allow bobcat permit holders to take bobcats while deer hunting. The move would have limited and possibly lowered the num-

ber of trappers and hunters drawn annually to receive bobcat harvest permits;

— Agreed to provide \$2,000 in funding support to the Cooperative North American Shotgunning Education Program, which helps states in the recruitment of hunters; develops educational materials to guide hunt-

ers on how to reduce wounding losses and improve shooting proficiency; and conducts ballistic research on nontoxic shot. The agency has helped fund this program for years; and

— Scheduled upcoming Board of Game Commissioners meetings for: June 10 and 11; Oct. 7 and 8; and Jan. 5, 6 and 7, 2003.

Charges filed in illegal elk killing

FOLLOWING an 18-month investigation, charges have been filed against two individuals for the illegal killing of the tremendous bull elk found along the Clinton/Cameron county line in October 2000.

Elk County WCO Doty McDowell filed charges against Jacob A. Fisher, 21, of Layton, Fayette County, and a 17-year-old juvenile, of Layton, for unlawful taking or possession of game or wildlife. The charges were filed this past April in District Justice Alvin Brown's office in Emporium.

If convicted, both face up to \$800 in fines, and possible loss of their hunting and trapping privileges for up to three years. Both individuals also face replacement costs of up to \$10,000 for the elk. McDowell noted that other individuals remain under investigation.

In June of 2001, Northcentral Region Director Barry Hambley organized a task force of several veteran WCOs to review all the evidence, including re-interviewing witnesses and others with information about the case. Members of the task force included Northcentral Region Law Enforcement Supervisor Warren "Quig" Stump; WCO McDowell; Mercer County WCO James Donatelli; and Venango County WCO Leonard Hribar.

Hambley also stressed that the

nearly \$5,000 in reward monies still stands for information leading to the arrest and conviction of those responsible. Contributing to the reward are \$1,000 from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation volunteers; \$500 each from the Pennsylvania Deer Association, United Bowhunters of Pennsylvania and the Safari Club International Blue Mountain, Delaware Valley, Lehigh Valley and Pittsburgh chapters; \$250 each from the Early Bird Sports Expo Association, Safari Club International Susquehannock Chapter, and the Sinnemahoning Sportsmen's Club; and \$100 from the Bucktail Rod & Gun Club, Cameron County.

Perhaps the largest elk in the state, the bull weighed more than 800 pounds, and was especially impressive because of its massive nontypical antlers. With an outside antler spread of more than six feet, this elk scored 406-7, and would have ranked in the top 30, according to the 1999 Boone & Crockett "Records of North American Big Game" book.

Eleven years old, the elk was first captured and marked by Game Commission personnel in 1997. Its movements were tracked over three years, and the huge bull was featured in the Game Commission's elk video, "Pennsylvania Elk: Reclaiming the Alleghenies."

25-Year Club

The Game Commission enjoys a tremendous spirit of dedication among its employees. Here are the most recent PGC employees to complete a quarter century of service.

F. Steven Dunham
Surveyor Technician
Supervisor
Dallas



Jerry D. Ross
Game Lands
Maintenance
Supervisor
Columbia Cross Roads



Edward M. Willow
Game Lands
Maintenance
Supervisor
Millerstown



Gary J. VanHorn
Game Lands
Maintenance
Worker
Mt. Pleasant Mills



Richard T. Haibach
Game Lands
Maintenance
Supervisor
Wattsburg

David R. Koppenhaver
Land Management
Officer
Clearville



Michael H. Colgan
Game Lands
Maintenance
Supervisor
Transfer



James M. Snyder
Game Lands
Maintenance
Supervisor
Marienville

Also attaining 25 years of service are William A. May, Game Lands Maintenance Supervisor, Sinnemahoning; and Diane E. Shultz, Administrative Officer 2, Mechanicsburg.



Off the Wire

by Bob D'Angelo

Missouri

Hunters posted a record for the second year in a row, killing 205,867 deer — up two percent from the prior year during the November firearms season in 2001.

North Dakota

Hunter success was 91 percent for moose and 46 percent for elk during the 2001 seasons.

Allegheny National Forest

Beech trees in portions of the ANF are dying from insect defoliation and recent growing season droughts, but most of all from beech bark disease. Beech bark disease moved into the U.S. from Nova Scotia in the 1890s and slowly spread south and east. The disease was first recorded in Pennsylvania in 1958, and the first documented tree mortality on the ANF was in 1985. Beech bark disease complex consists of a scale insect and necrotic fungus. The scale insect appears first and makes a small piercing hole in the bark, and then in three to five years the fungus enters through the hole.

West Virginia

Hunters harvested 43 wild boars in 2001 — down from 46 in 2000. Thirty animals were taken in Logan County and 13 in Boone County. Bowhunters accounted for 18 boars.

Firearms Survey

According to a survey by the National Shooting Sports Foundation, 77 percent of those surveyed agree completely or somewhat that firearms have a legitimate place in modern society.

Hunting and Shooting Sports Heritage Fund

Since its inception in 1999, the Hunting and Shooting Sports Heritage Fund has provided funding for a professional, coordinated response to politically motivated lawsuits filed by big-city mayors against firearm manufacturers, retailers, and trade groups to seek damages for the criminal misuse of firearms. To date, 18 of these suits have been decided, and 17 have been fully or partly dismissed.

Nova Scotia

A neurological disease is killing moose in the province, but scientists are unable to identify the specific disease or its causes. Affected moose lose motor coordination and fear of humans.

Florida

The wild turkey population in Florida is about 100,000 — 80,000 Osceola and 20,000 Eastern turkeys.

South Dakota

There were 29 hunting related incidents, including two fatalities, in 2001, which is slightly below the 10-year average of 29.5.

Folks who won't attend public meetings for issues such as education and taxes will show up by the hundreds when the subject is about hunting.

The Survey Says

THE AIR of expectancy was like an election headquarters, only here there were members of both parties. What would the vote be?

The word came around 9 o'clock. I checked my e-mails one more time, and it was there, the results of the vote taken by the Board of Pennsylvania Game Commissioners at its April 9 meeting on the proposed seasons and bag limits for the 2002-03 hunting seasons.

I printed out the 20 pages of news from the Game Commission and carried them into the kitchen. "Well," I said, as the eyes all turned toward me, "we'll be looking for three-on-a-side this hunting season."

From the varied, even extreme views on antler restrictions that I knew were in the

room, I didn't know whether to look for an explosion or cheering. What I heard was a subdued, "Oh." I guess I shouldn't have expected anything else. After all, when issues or candidates evoke passion, that's the first flash of fire. Once the flame settles down, it's time to put on the pot and cook.

Whatever an individual hunter's feelings on antler restrictions or other hunting season changes approved that day by the commission, a decision had been made by those entrusted with making decisions. The "oh" I heard from the group at my house was one of acceptance of how they'll be hunting this coming fall. If those who spoke seemed preoccupied, that was because they were already adjusting their hunting plans and outlook, seeing into the future.

Hunting season get-togethers around my place are always an excuse to bat around opposing views. Turkey season falls before the November elections, and the night before the opener the talk runs as much to politics as to where we'll go yelping tomorrow.

THERE'S no doubt about this one; it's "plenty" legal anywhere in the state under the new antler restriction regulations.

Bob Steiner



At turkey camp we have everything from people actively involved in both political parties, to folks who don't vote, to those who waffle for the sake of (friendly) argument. When the last Presidential election had a long aftermath, hunting camp political debate lasted further into the season than usual. Even in an off year for the major elections, there's always some good-natured ribbing to be done on the relative merits of the Dems and the GOP.

With the next Presidential and state gubernatorial elections only looming on the horizon, the Game Commission's deer management proposals gave last fall's hunting camp get-togethers plenty of stuff to talk about. These weren't just "academic" chats, and the discussions sometimes got loud and red-faced. That didn't mean the good friends wouldn't be laughing and talking about something else in a minute. What it did mean is that they cared.

Hunters continually amaze me in the passion they have for their recreation. People who wouldn't think of writing, let alone calling or visiting, lawmakers and other high-level decision-makers, go all out to let their opinions known when it comes to hunting and wildlife. Folks who won't attend public meetings for issues such as education and taxes will show up by the hundreds, even the thousands, when the subject is their favorite sport. They line up to address whole rooms full of people verbally, when they'd normally shy away from saying a prayer out loud at the dinner table.

Whether we agree with their stance or not, their willingness to be an active part of the dialog must be appreciated. Personally, I'm very impressed with these sportsmen and sportswomen. That they care enough to make the extra effort is more than can be said for most people. What these hunters are displaying is true stand-up-and-be-counted democracy.

In the midst of the controversy about deer hunting proposals, as outdoor writers my husband and I decided to do something different in the weekly column we pen for

our local newspaper. We were hearing so many varying views in our own hunting group and out and about in the community. Each person we talked to was convinced the majority felt the same way.

Just what did the hunters in our area think about the proposals, including antler restrictions? What were their feelings about the season revisions they had just experienced, such as hunting bucks and does at the same time? We talked to our newspaper editor and got the go-ahead to do a survey (nonscientific). In mid-December, we published 23 questions in our column and gave respondents until the end of the month to send in their answers. We told readers we'd compile them and send the results to the Game Commission.

We learned a lot in that survey, and not just from the answers to our questions. I'm not going to go into the results, only say that their answers and comments all went to the Game Commissioner from our region, to Dr. Gary Alt, and to the commission's region office, for their information.

One of the lessons we learned in doing the survey was how hard it is to come up with a set of objective questions that do not lead the reader toward the answer the survey-maker wants, either consciously or subconsciously. We spent a day writing and rewriting the questions, and even after the survey questions were published, we read some that we wished we had reworded again. We came to appreciate the difficulty of professional pollsters.

The second lesson we learned is that the old saw, "Be careful what you wish for, you just might get it," is true. We hoped for a good response, as did the newspaper editor. We knew that the number of returns would gauge interest in our column, so we were sticking our own necks out if nobody, or very few, returned surveys. We didn't want to have to look for another "job."

Worrying about our professional "skins" was less a concern than whether hunters

would care enough to sit down and complete the survey. We didn't publish a clip-and-mail form, just a list of questions. Respondents would have to take another piece of paper, number it, write in the answers and comments, use their own envelope and stamp, and send the whole thing to the newspaper. That was a lot to ask, especially during the holiday season.

In total, we got slightly more than 200 responses. In our area, with its small towns, that was an excellent return, the newspaper editor told us. When we finished basking in the volume of returns, the work began. We spent another two days entering the results of the questions into a computer spreadsheet, tallying them, and then copying and putting together respondents' comments on each of the questions. We were at last able to present the Game Commission with something readable, understandable and relevant in gauging local hunters' viewpoints. We published the survey results in one of our subsequent newspaper columns, so the sportsmen and sportswomen could see how their opinions fared.

It was fun and, we hope, useful to the commission. In the end we figured it didn't cost us more than about \$10 in mailing fees (in hours spent versus income for writing the columns, we were in negative digits).

No matter what the bottom line, the project was important. We got many responses that thanked us for asking how they felt about the deer season changes. People appreciated that their thoughts were wanted and valued. I was impressed with the time and effort that was expended in filling out the survey and adding pages of comments. A few were typewritten or computer generated, but far more were

handwritten.

Some folks obviously made the survey a family project. I found that most significant and touching. In one return envelope would be sheets of answers from a group that, from their ages and names, had to be grandpas, uncles, dads, sons (of junior hunting license age), as well as the female counterparts to those relations.

That meant that the families probably gathered around the table, maybe after Christmas dinner, got out pencil and paper, and one of them read each of the questions. They must have talked about them. I found it heart-warming that several generations sat down to this give-and-take. Isn't lack of communication what so many complain about in the American family? We'd certainly had it here, when the issue was hunting. I hadn't planned to enable that occurrence, but I felt doubly pleased that our deer hunters' survey could be the conduit for more family conversation.

I will tell you the respondents to our survey were from ages 12 to 80. That the 80-year-old remains interested in what his future deer hunting will be like, I find uplifting (I want to be just like that when I'm his age). One of the 12-year-olds couldn't comment on how he liked last year's new concurrent deer season compared to the traditional separate buck and doe seasons, because it was his first year of hunting. To him the concurrent season was "traditional."

Whatever directions game management takes in Pennsylvania — and it will continue to evolve as the landscape and the wildlife and people on it change — one thing seems to be constant. Hunters do care, or so the survey says. □

And you thought that old Alfred Hitchcock movie was just a Hollywood fantasy.

Mobbed by Birds

LAST YEAR I was mobbed 11 times. Each time I was minding my own business, walking quietly along our woodland trails. But nesting birds didn't see it that way. To them I was a predator, and they wanted me to move on.

Birds, and other animals, mob by harassing a common enemy, such as a hawk, owl, snake or even a human. They call loudly, surround the predator, and often perform wing and tail movements called "distraction displays." All of this commotion, usually by a pair of nesting birds, brings other birds in to see what is happening.

Douglas H. Shedd, who studied mobbing for 10 years, recorded mobbing by 60 songbird species, five woodpecker species,

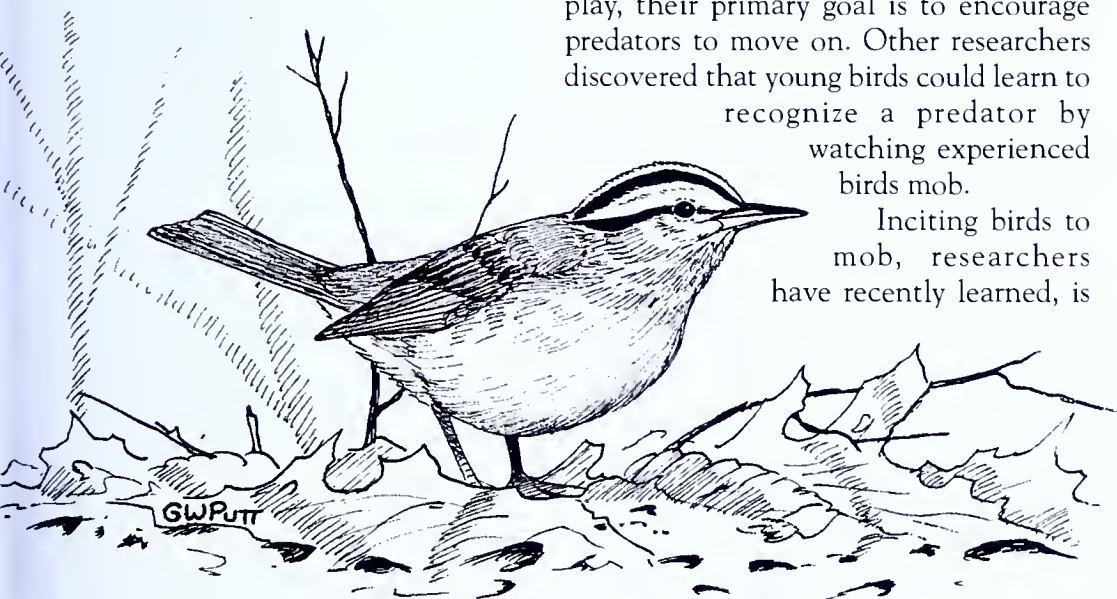
two hawk species, and one hummingbird species. Gulls, terns and other colony-nesting seabirds also mob.

Shedd wanted to find out why birds mob, so he used a stuffed screech owl and recorded screech owl calls to encourage mobbing from both summer and permanent resident birds. Summer residents, he discovered, stopped mobbing entirely at the end of the breeding season, while permanent residents decreased but didn't altogether stop then.

Black-capped chickadees were especially insistent, continuing throughout fall and winter, even on a snowy January day at 25 degrees below zero. Shedd concluded that although birds may use mobbing to defend a nest or serve as a distraction display, their primary goal is to encourage predators to move on. Other researchers discovered that young birds could learn to

recognize a predator by watching experienced birds mob.

Inciting birds to mob, researchers have recently learned, is





an excellent way to find out what species of nesting birds are in the area. But instead of walking through the woods and depending on luck, as I have, they play recorded mobbing calls of certain birds, especially black-capped chickadees.

One study in Canada using black-capped chickadees identified 50 bird species, and another in Wisconsin, 24. During my walks last year, from May 29 until July 15, 22 bird species mobbed and/or responded to mobbing calls by others. Many were repeat performers; others appeared only once. All except downy woodpeckers were songbirds and 17 were migrants.

A pair of northern cardinals started it. As I walked through a 10-year-old recovering clearcut, I heard a low warning call, like a *rat-a-tat-tat*, and then full-throated scolding calls from the cardinals. They moved toward me from out of the underbrush, and I knew they had a nest nearby, so I stood still. A pair of American redstarts, an eastern towhee, rose-breasted grosbeak, red-eyed vireo, black-capped chickadee, worm-eating warbler and a sec-

ond male cardinal flew in for a closer look.

Best of all, though, was a totally unexpected bird, one I have rarely seen on our mountain — a yellow-throated vireo. Because of the date and habitat, it could have been either a late migrant or a breeding bird, because its preferred nesting territory — large trees in an open woods — existed nearby at the edge of the ravine. The eight species I saw that day turned out to be the highest number I attracted at one time during my unplanned mobbing study.

On June 2, while walking along Laurel Ridge Trail I heard the cries of nestlings. About 40 feet off the trail I found a downy woodpecker cavity nest in a dead limb of a live chestnut oak tree. The parents erupted in full cry, bringing in a pair of hooded warblers, followed by a scolding red-eyed vireo, an ovenbird and a worm-eating warbler. Afraid that I would attract a real predator to their nest, I quickly moved on.

Two days later a pair of ovenbirds scolded when I neared the rock pile turn-off for Lady Slipper Trail. In response to the ovenbirds' distress, a blue jay screeched as he flew low overhead, and then an eastern towhee called. The parents, however, were the most persistent as they continued scolding and flying around me with their orange crests erect.

Ovenbirds, as ground nesters, are especially proficient at mobbing. One overcast, foggy, Solstice day, ovenbirds mobbed me along Laurel Ridge Trail. A red-eyed vireo, four tufted titmice, eastern towhees, a ruby-throated hummingbird, a male scarlet tanager, and a black-and-white warbler came in to help. The titmice seemed as upset as the ovenbirds, so they may have had fledglings nearby. I was particularly pleased to see the black-and-white warbler. Although

I had heard their distinctive *weeza, weeza, weeza* often, it was the first good look I had had of one all season.

Ovenbirds were still mobbing on July 15, this time along the Short Circuit Trail. A female scarlet tanager and a red-eyed vireo flew in for a look, followed by a female common yellowthroat and then a male. Finally, after 10 minutes of mobbing calls, a male towhee decided to check it out. His mate appeared a few minutes later.

Earlier, on June 28, the towhees initiated mobbing at the edge of the Norway spruce grove. A male towhee mobbed, while a female sat nearby with food in her beak. A pair of chickadees, a common yellowthroat, and an indigo bunting added their scolding calls to those of the towhee.

Worm-eating warblers, another ground nester, frequently mob. On a splendid late June day, the sky scrubbed clean by a recent rain, I wandered along Black Gum Trail. Suddenly, a pair of worm-eating warblers, one with food in its beak, went into a frantic distraction-display, calling and fluttering close to me. In flew an ovenbird to look and scold, followed by a singing red-eyed vireo, and finally, a pair of ovenbirds. I kept moving on, but the worm-eating warblers followed me, still scolding, for a couple hundred feet.

Field birds also mobbed me. On June 5, at the top of First Field, chipping sparrows scolded and flew toward me. I had one glimpse of a fledgling as both chickadees and a pair of towhees joined in with their cries. And, on July 2, as I walked the Butterfly Loop around First Field, I was mobbed by distraction-displaying and scolding indigo buntings, common yellowthroats, and field and chipping sparrows.

Then there were the chickadees that researchers use to attract other birds. They mobbed me only once, on the Fourth of July. Six chickadees surrounded me and scolded, bring in a silent blue-gray gnatcatcher, a male downy woodpecker and a red-eyed vireo.

Of all the birds that mobbed or were attracted by mobbing, the chickadees, at 11, numbered the most, followed by nine towhees, eight ovenbirds, five red-eyed vireos, five common yellowthroats, and four each of worm-eating warblers, chipping sparrows and tufted titmice. The other 14 species that responded three or fewer times were American redstarts, rose-breasted grosbeaks, cardinals, yellowthroated vireos, hooded warblers, blue jays, robins, ruby-throated hummingbirds, scarlet tanagers, black-and-white warblers, indigo buntings, field sparrows, blue-gray gnatcatchers and downy woodpeckers.

Many of the species I recorded were the same as those found by researchers in Canada and Wisconsin. In one study, using the recorded *high-zee* and *chick-a-dee* calls of a chickadee mobbing a stuffed saw-whet owl, researchers attracted 50 species in New Brunswick and 24 species in Quebec, and they proved that mobbing accurately measured the reproductive activity of black-throated blue warblers and ovenbirds.

The Wisconsin study using black-capped chickadee mobbing calls found that "all of the 24 species responding to the black-capped chickadee calls nest near chickadees and have frequent exposure to chickadees' active predator mobbing" and concluded that, "mixed-species mobbing may be an important factor in successful predator defense."

Another study in southern Quebec, where researchers played the mobbing calls of both chickadees and red-breasted nuthatches to find out whether forest birds would cross openings to respond to the calls, attracted 37 bird species. Chickadees, red-breasted nuthatches and red-eyed vireos responded the most to the calls, but were reluctant to cross even narrow open areas. In fact, "when given the choice of traveling through woodland or across a gap, the majority of [birds] preferred woodland routes, even when they were three times longer than the shortcuts in the open."

calls mixed with screech owl calls. “Hundreds of participants across the country spent lots of time searching the woods, but they didn’t find many nests. If the timing [of playing mobbing calls] is right, some birds may approach while carrying food to their young. Others may come with their recently fledged young,” they wrote in their spring 2001 *Birdscope* publication.

Encouraged by these uses of mobbing calls, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology decided to supply its citizen scientists participating in their Birds in Forested Landscapes breeding bird study with a recording of chickadee mobbing

Don't Pick Me!

I'm a member of the orchid family and bloom in June and July.

I'm very pretty with white petals and a pinkish fluffed-out pouch.

I'm a threatened species mainly because gardeners try to transplant me.

I need to be kept in my wet environment.

I am the _____,

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 5 1

1 6 9 10 10 11 12

I'm a member of the phlox family and bloom in June and July.

I grow in a cluster of bluish-purple, 5-petaled flowers; my long stamens dangle.

I am thought to be endangered due to wetland destruction.

I am the _____,

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 2 8 8 9 10

56

Straight from the Bowstring

By John Kasun

Height is not all it's cracked up to be. For a treestand bowhunter there's something to be said for . . .

How Low Can You Go?



Sandy Kasun

CAN YOU immediately pick out the hunter in this treestand? This bowhunter took advantage of available cover by placing his stand among the tree's lower branches.

WHEN IT COMES to treestands, many bowhunters think higher is better. Many hunting magazine articles suggest 20 feet as the minimum height for a treestand and higher if possible. Trust me, 20 feet is high, and even Tarzan gets nose bleeds above the 30 feet some bowhunters claim they place their stands. I sometimes wonder if bowhunters, like fishermen, tend to exaggerate at times.

While hunters take to the trees to put

the odds in their favor, simply hunting from a treestand is no guarantee of success. As a matter of fact, an improperly placed treestand can actually decrease the chances of getting a deer within bow range without being detected.

Treestand placement, like everything in bowhunting, must suit the rapidly changing conditions that occur during the bow season. To be most effective a treestand should be positioned to provide maximum cover while offering good shooting opportunities. Excessive height does not guarantee either of these two goals.

During rifle season a high treestand combined with the absence of foliage can give the hunter a great field of view; however a high bowhunting treestand can actually reduce the hunter's field of view. Placing a treestand too high during the early season means the bowhunter must look down through a thick covering of leaves and any heavy ground cover, which can severely limit visibility. As a solution to this problem many hunters trim out



Sandy Kasun

THIS HUNTER has chosen a tree with low hanging limbs to break up his outline, but he has made a common error in setting his stand too high. In this location he'll be silhouetted against the sky.

some branches to clear shooting lanes. While this practice is illegal on state game lands, state forests and state parks, and not recommended on private land, it's also a bad hunting practice.

During my 47 years of bowhunting I have found that it is best to leave your hunting area in a natural state and to position your stand site so it blends in with the surroundings. Remember, a deer is completely familiar with its home territory, and anything that is out of place or has changed will quickly draw its attention. While deer will adapt to changes, it makes no sense to arouse their suspicions and place them on alert by making unnecessary alterations to your hunting area. I have found that when bowhunting I do not really need "shooting lanes" but, rather, "shooting holes." When selecting a treestand site I always make sure that I have a series of holes I can shoot through. If I find I have to remove any branches thicker than my finger to clear one of these holes, I reposition the stand slightly. This allows

me to command the area surrounding my stand while leaving the site as natural as possible.

Another major disadvantage of high treestands is the fact that most animals within bow range offer shots that are more directly down. These extreme angle shots result in a smaller target, force the bowhunter to shoot down through the heavy muscles and skeleton of the back and shoulders, and cause most bowhunters to shoot over the animal. Hits from these high angles often do not exit the bottom of the deer, resulting in high entry wounds, no exit holes and a poor if non-existent blood trail. On the other hand, a lower treestand offers the bowhunter some distinct shooting advantages. The sharp downward angle decreases with the lower stand height, the tendency to overshoot is reduced, and any animal within shooting range usually offers a "full size target." Penetration is easier in the softer side of the animal, and the slightly elevated angle allows for a low exit hole, resulting in a maximum blood trail. Basically, the lower the stand the better the shooting angle, the larger the target and the easier the penetration.

While a low stand will produce the best angle for shooting, most bowhunters feel a high stand helps them avoid being scented. A hunter should never depend solely on stand height to avoid being scented. The elimination or reduction of scent starts with clean clothes, personal hygiene, common sense and the proper use of cover scents. A bowhunter who ignores the basic rules of scent control and arrives at his stand wet with perspiration has already laid a scent trail that cannot be eliminated by the simple placement of a 25-foot treestand.

My wife and I carry our hunting clothes to our stands in backpacks to keep the clothes fresh and to avoid getting sweated up. We wear only clean clothes washed in a non-scented soap and use an Earth cover scent on our rubber boots. Using these methods we experience no problems with

being scented regardless of treestand height, and it is not uncommon for deer to cross over the paths we used to approach our stands without ever catching our scent.

While many bowhunters think that height alone will prevent a deer from spotting them, nothing could be further from the truth. Being 25 feet up a tree with no cover is like being in the middle of a parking lot up a bare telephone pole. To avoid being seen, cover is the answer. Select a tree that offers the most cover at the lowest height possible. I like to select a tree that has several low hanging limbs. I then place my treestand just above and often "in" these low limbs, keeping some limbs below me, some above and some behind me. This provides a nest of cover and prevents me from being silhouetted against the skyline.

Another ideal situation is to find a clump of trees or a tree with smaller trees or saplings growing at its base. In these situations I place my stand on the larger tree, while using the limbs of the trees growing at the base as cover. When hunting at these low heights I have found it best to shoot from a sitting position. This minimizes any movement that may catch any animal's attention once they are within bow range.

Tie in or lock on style treestands, as opposed to climbing stands, work best for these applications because they can be easily placed in or above limbs. While climbing stands are convenient for a quick ascent, they are best used for applications on straight trees with little or no cover. While this can be acceptable for a rifle hunter, it is not the best situation for a bowhunter. Climbing stands can be used in trees with heavy cover, but they must be used as a lock on stand, and then a ladder or climbing aid of some kind must be used to climb the tree and position the stand.

Setting a low treestand seems to go against everything that is logical, but I have been using this method with great success for many years. I must admit, however, that I was forced into this technique out of ne-

cessity. My wife, Sandy, who has been my bowhunting companion for years, did not feel comfortable in any treestand more than 10 feet high, and 8 feet was more to her liking. While at first I thought hunting that low was impossible, she soon proved otherwise, and to date she has taken more than 40 deer with a bow from treestands placed 10 feet or lower.

As an example, several years ago Sandy and I were invited to bowhunt Maryland's Eastern Shore, and the treestands had been placed ahead of time by our guide at heights of 20 or more feet and had little or no cover. Knowing the lack of cover would make hunting difficult and that Sandy would not hunt from these heights, I persuaded the guide to allow us to place our own stands. We found a medium sized oak surrounded by several small saplings about 12 feet high. I placed Sandy's stand on the oak tree, up about 7 feet, but behind the saplings. At this height she was completely obscured by the smaller trees. If I had placed her stand at 10 feet or higher she actually would have been above the available cover provided by the saplings and, therefore, exposed. This was definitely a case of where lower was better.

It was obvious from the guide's reaction that he didn't agree with the set up we had selected. Over the next three days, however, Sandy had 28 deer pass her stand, the farthest was approximately 20 yards and the closest directly under her, feeding in the saplings. None of those deer winded or saw her, including the 8-point and 6-point bucks she killed at nine and 12 yards, respectively. (It's legal to take multiple bucks in Maryland with bonus licenses.) During the same hunt I took a 10-point from a treestand placed about 12 feet off the ground, among the heavy cover offered by the lower limbs of a twisted hickory tree. That buck was one of five bucks and 22 does that passed my "low" treestand during three days of hunting. None of those deer, most of which passed within 10 yards, ever knew I was there. I

Game Commission Hunter-Trapper Education Division Chief Keith Snyder recommends that bowhunters:

- Place treestand from 12 to 16 feet off of the ground. This height will establish an angle more likely to result in a "double-lung" shot. Heights above this recommended range will result in a single-lung shot at best. Extreme heights will provide shot angles that should not be taken, as heavy skeletal structure can deflect shots away from the vital organs.
- Use only Treestand Manufacturers Association (TMA) tested and certified stands.
- Use a full-body harness at all times when your feet are off the ground, especially when climbing and descending trees. Waistbelts and upper-body harnesses are not recommended, as they can constrict breathing and limit your ability to free yourself or re-enter the stand in the event of a fall.

would say that proves that properly placed low treestands can be deadly.

My wife is not alone when it comes to her feelings regarding treestand height. During my bowhunting seminars, I talk to hunters all over the country who are uncomfortable or feel unsafe in high stands. Many of them did not realize they could hunt effectively from lower heights where they do feel comfortable.

When setting a treestand, consider the direction from which you will approach the stand. While it is impossible to always predict from which direction a deer might appear, it is important to approach your stand from the direction deer movement is least likely. This is to ensure the deer does not cross your path and possibly pick up your scent. Although I try to remain scent free at all times, I still take every precaution possible.

One key factor often overlooked when setting a stand is the position of the sun. If at all possible, never set a stand facing into the morning or evening sun. First of all, facing the sun is uncomfortable to say the least. However, at just the right angle, the sun can cause an intense glare when reflected off branches and foliage, which can result in a "bright out" that makes visibility difficult and, at times, impossible.

Pay special attention to the skyline when setting a treestand near the crest of a ridge. Regardless of how high or how low your stand is set, if an approaching animal

spots your silhouette against the open skyline, you're busted. Always keep your stand height below the skyline and place the stand in such position that ensures you have adequate back cover.

The best way to look at this subject is not how high or how low to place your treestand, but where to place it to be most effective, which involves several considerations as previously discussed. Although I was forced into considering low treestand placement because of my wife's height limitations, I soon learned that in many cases a low treestand was actually the best set up.

In my personal hunting arsenal I have 13 hang-on treestands, 2 tripods and 2 quad pods. At some point during the season I will have all of them set, and I can guarantee you that more than half will be set at heights between 8 and 12 feet.

These methods work best early to mid-season, when foliage still provides sufficient cover. During the late season, after the foliage has dropped, low treestands still work, but sites are more difficult to find. At this time look for clusters of trees or trees that are overlapped with branches of a nearby pine or hemlock to provide the necessary cover. Another solution is to use the add-on branches now available from camouflage manufacturers such as Cover Systems.

When setting up your treestands remember the key question is, "How low can you go?" □

The Shooters' Corner

By Don Lewis

The only real advantage offered by reloading is the ability to tailor a cartridge to a particular rifle or shooting situation. True, handloading saves money, but the real satisfaction comes from testing and using your own loads.

News for the Shooter

AS THE YEARS go by I have less time to look forward than I do to look back. It's been a mite more than 70 years since I fired my first real rifle. When I was about six, my brothers bought me a BB gun. It cocked like a cork gun (break open) and didn't have much more power. Still, I bounced pellets off tin cans and glass milk bottles at our waste dump behind the pigpen. I say bounced because it didn't have enough power to break even a water glass.

I went through two or three stronger, spring-loaded BB guns, which had enough power to kill English sparrows and mice. I don't remember the name of my last lever-cocking outfit, but it was the best of all. At 10 to 15 feet, it would stop a garden-raiding chipmunk in its tracks.

Around 1934, I got a real .22 rimfire single-shot for Christmas. I guess the family felt it was better for me to have my own rather than trying to borrow one to shoot barn rats and crows. My brother Dan had a good repeating .22, but he kept it at his girlfriend's house, because their barn was literally swarming with rats. He spent a lot of time

Helen Lewis



DON LEWIS using a CED Millennium chronograph. A convenient feature is that the skyscreens are attached to a rail that fits on a camera tripod. The complete CED system is easy to transport.

shooting rats — or at least that is what he used for an excuse to go visiting.

Through my high school years, I had just two guns — the rimfire and a 20-gauge double barrel, but I was content. I didn't know anything about ballistics then. I thought high brass shotgun shells shot harder than low brass, and I partly believed high velocity bullets rose above the bore. During all those formative years, I just hunted. I didn't know what a reloading press was; in fact, I didn't even know smokeless powder shells could be reloaded. I did know a neighbor reloaded brass 12-gauge shells with black powder. These days, with all the equipment, computerized ballistic programs and technical information we have, I wonder how we managed to do as well as we did back then.

Changes in the shooting and hunting realms began to make headway shortly after World War II. By 1952, handloading was gaining in popularity, and Remington's .222 was sweeping through the varmint hunting ranks like a miniature tornado. Handloading and the .222 made a perfect marriage, and undoubtedly introduced thousands of hunters and shooters to the world of exterior ballistics.

Being introduced to ballistics is one thing, but fully understanding the subject is another. The reloading press and .222 cartridge got the ballistic ball rolling, but it would have stopped short of being meaningful if the chronograph hadn't made its appearance on the home level around 1960.

I mentioned the year because by that time handloading had become a serious tool for cartridge development. Many handloaders, myself included, began reloading for economic reasons. By purchasing components in large quantities, four reloads could be cranked out for about the price of one factory round. That might have been the primary reason for starting to reload, but when handloaders began testing their loads by shooting 5- and 10-shot 100-yard groups with various prim-

ers, powders and bullets, the quest for the most accurate load combination soon replaced the desire to just save money. In fact, as handloaders became more knowledgeable and proficient, it became evident that the basic reloading tools were not adequate to develop precision loads.

By 1960 I was more or less up to my ears in reloading, but I simply couldn't develop a new load combination without knowing its muzzle velocity. I could guess or estimate the velocity by comparing my load combinations with loads shown in a manual, but I knew full well I was working in uncharted waters. When I saw a chronograph advertised in a Herter's catalog, I purchased one. While it did work to some extent, it was cantankerous and unreliable. It used two wire screens made with many vertical wires and a single continuous wire running back and forth horizontally. When a bullet broke the continuous wire on the first screen, the internal clock began ticking and stopped when the bullet broke the continuous wire in the second screen. When a shot was fired, rows of lights with number values beside each light would light. Adding the number values in the different rows and using the total figure with an interpolation table gave the instrumental velocity at 15 feet. Ten feet to the first screen and half the distance of the screen spacing, which was 10 feet.

There's no point in discussing the merits and liabilities of the various chronographs I've had or used, but it's worth noting that some of today's chronographs are sophisticated and completely dependable. On top of that, some of them offer a wealth of ballistic data. The Oehler Model 43 Personal Ballistic Laboratory (PBL), for example, will also give chamber pressure readings in conventional rifles without damaging the action. Using the Acoustic Target in conjunction with the 43 PBL gives downrange velocities and the ballistic coefficient of each bullet fired through the target a hundred yards away.

Shooters can find many chronographs

on the market today. From my point of view, all work well if a person is interested only in average velocities. Because discussing this point is an article in itself, I'll leave the chronograph discussion with two bits of advice: Your best purchase is a chronograph that is guaranteed to be accurate to within 0.1 percent (at 3,000 fps, that is three feet), and be doubly sure your skyscreen spacing is measured precisely.

I'm on safe ground stating that the computer has become a major player in the field of ballistics. This technology has opened the door to a world of shooting data that even the firearm and ammunition makers didn't have only a few years ago. Sure, some of the early computer ballistic programs were shaky, and offered only the fundamentals. But as computers switched from disks to hard drives to hold information, bigger, more sophisticated programs became possible. Today's hard drives can hold an immense amount of data, which means that massive comprehensive ballistic programs can be stored on them. Also the CD-Rom is capable of storing vast amounts of data. A single CD holds Sierra's new 4th Edition Reloading Manuals, and that's a huge amount of data, believe me.

I'm still in the process of testing the Sierra 4th Edition Reloading CD, but in addition to general ballistic data, the program will make charts and graphs that include path of the bullet, bullet drop, energy, sight-in range and several other pieces of information. Simply enter the velocity and other data and click on one of the factors mentioned, and a graph is produced — some of it in color.

I have no idea how many bullet brands, weights and styles are listed, but there seems to be no end to the data this program offers. One feature I wish it had (maybe it does, and I haven't found it) is combining graphs. For instance, I would like to take the trajectory graph and integrate other graphs on it. Once I get more familiar with this program, I intend to call Sierra's Technical Service (it's free) to learn

more about what it has to offer. With what I've seen already, though, I'm convinced it's one of the best on the market and should be in every handloader's library.

We have come a long way in the reloading and shooting fields since the days of "factory cartridges only." I'm not demeaning factory cartridges. They've been around more than a century and perform to a high degree for millions of shooters. The only real advantage offered by reloading is the ability to tailor a cartridge to a particular rifle or shooting situation. True, handloading saves money, but the real satisfaction comes from using your own loads. That's why I think many handloaders should also learn to make jacketed bullets. Making your own bullets opens the door to a maze of weights and designs. A few years ago, I dropped a wary chuck at 285 steps with a bullet I had made that morning, and I can assure you, I got a lot of satisfaction.

The day of reloading just to save money is gone. Today's handloaders are more sophisticated and interested in producing top quality reloads. It's worth noting that developing a new load requires a chronograph. Buying a chronograph may discourage a lot of handloaders but, for general type work, the CED (Competitive Edge Dynamics) Millennium costs around \$179 in Dillon's BLUE catalog. It offers a good bit of ballistic information. I feel it's only fair to say that some chronographs are more accurate than others, but most any chronograph today is adequate for load development.

Just working the loading press handle is not enough anymore. Handloaders need to get more involved with chronographs and computerized ballistic programs. You'll never be sorry. □

Fun Game answers:

showy lady's slipper; Jacob's ladder.

Kettles of Grace

IN EARLY SPRING, and again in summer, turkey vultures assemble and soar in flocks. Birders call them “kettles,” sweeping, circling funnels of big birds. If you are fishing the Youghiogheny River, or Pine Creek, or some parts of the upper Susquehanna, you may see them appear over a canyon rim at mid-afternoon, one bird at a time, until there are 30 or more black buoyant beings orbiting over the gorge. Watching them is bad for the fishing. It erodes concentration the way the river has gnawed through the very ridges around you. But beholding their flight is a catch in its own right. It’s a lesson in atmospheric topography, and it blunts the edge of unease about our own mortal course.

The vultures maneuver the gorge as kids on skateboards have mastered the concave half-pipe. They rise, effortless over the hotter hillsides, then turn and fall into the cool, dank air above the stream. In the depth of the trough they must flap with labor through the denser air, dragged along by its belly by the river itself. Here they pump and claw, their primaries splayed wide apart like the fingers of an over-ambitious pianist.

But if you pay attention, you can see what’s to come next. On the sun-soaked mountainsides the oak leaves ripple and fan, their silver undersides winking in the updraft.

The vultures toil toward the shoreline, plunge into the ascending columns, and are born ever higher on the heat. There they assume their truest self, sweeping, silent, wings held in their signature “V,” uniform black — save the metallic gray you can see through the trailing edge of the wings when the light is right.

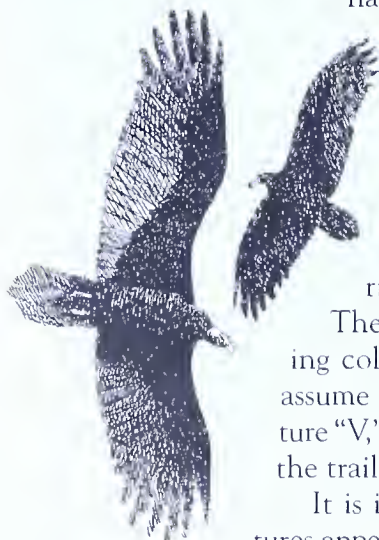
It is interesting to be among people in the outdoors when vultures appear. If the birds are noticed at all they will be called “hawks”

by most observers. Tactfully point out the error and your companions look stunned and surprised, as if vultures were mythic creatures or the inhabitants only of B-grade westerns.

They are real enough, and to tempt them I have sometimes lain on the ledges above the gorge in the searing sun, motionless as a living mammal can be, except for one eye squinting skyward to track the airborne birds in the event they would come too close. Their shadows leap and plummet across the treetops toward me. If they are far enough from the sun I see the pink heads tilt a little in inspection as they pass over, but they never swing by for a second look. It is impossible to fool them. They know death too well, and they know a silly game when they see one.

Away they wheel and wander, in search of more trustworthy hosts where they find them. Their airy open patrols, in the bright light of day, across this familiar land where we live, is a sign that the end of life need be no dark stranger. It is the natural companion to living, no more to be feared than the breathing or the birth.

Ben Moyer



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PENNSYLVANIA GAME NEWS (ISSN 0031-451X) is published monthly for \$12 per year, \$34.50 for three years, or membership in Pennsylvania's Cooperative Farm-Game Project or Safety Zone Project; to Canada and all other foreign countries, \$13 U.S. currency, per year. Published by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Phone (717) 787-4250. Periodicals postage paid at Harrisburg, Pa. CHANGE OF ADDRESS: POSTMASTER: Send both old and new addresses to Pennsylvania Game News, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Allow six weeks for processing. Material accepted is subject to our requirements for editing and revising. Author payment covers all rights and title to accepted material, including manuscripts, photographs, drawings and illustrations. No information contained in this magazine may be used for advertising or commercial purposes. Opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Copyright © 2002 by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, an Equal Opportunity Employer, the programs of which are all administered consistent with the goals and objectives of Affirmative Action. All rights reserved.

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Newsstand consultant, Celtic Moon Publishing, 1-877-730-6263

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Financially Speaking

SO, HOW DO YOU MEASURE UP? According to preliminary figures from the “2001 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation,” we spent, on average, \$1,581 on hunting last year. Most of our money was spent on equipment, \$790 each; food, \$158; and transportation, \$142. Licenses and fees, by the way, amounted to \$47, or just 3 percent of our expenditures.

Of the estimated 13,034,000 hunters 16 years of age and older in the United States, 10.9 million (84 percent) hunted big game; more than 5 million (42 percent), small game; nearly 3 million (23 percent), migratory game birds; and 1 million (8 percent) hunted “other animals,” woodchucks and raccoons, for example.

In terms of days afield, we — again, on average — hunted 17 days. Big game hunters averaged 14 days afield; small game hunters, 11; migratory game bird hunters, 10; and those after the other animals, 18.

This survey is the tenth such survey conducted for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service since 1955. Compared to the 1996 survey, the number of hunters has declined 7 percent. More specifically, small game hunters declined 22 percent and other animal hunting declined 31 percent; the number of big game hunters and migratory bird hunters stayed the same. Despite the drop in participants, expenditures, adjusted for inflation, remained the same since 1996. There was, however, a 27 percent drop in expenditures for rifles, archery equipment and decoys, which was offset by increases in auxiliary hunting equipment — camping equipment and boats.

A further breakdown of expenditures gives a good indication of interests. Last year, 22 percent of hunters bought a firearm; 15 percent bought a bow or some sort of archery equipment; 7 percent spent money on handloading equipment; 7 percent on dogs or dog related items; and 3 percent on muzzleloaders or some sort of primitive arms. Interestingly, 13 percent spent an average of \$305 on land leases or purchases.

Overall, in 2001, more than 80 million Americans (39 percent of the U. S. population) 16 and older enjoyed some recreational activity related to fish and wildlife, and spent \$110 billion in the process.

Nearly 54 million fed wildlife; 46 million went bird watching; 14 million photographed wildlife; 13 million maintained plantings or natural areas for wildlife; and 11 million visited public parks or natural areas specifically to enjoy wildlife.

As pointed out in the summary, at the time of the 1991 survey, the country was in a recession, gas prices were increasing and the Gulf War was going on. In 1996, we enjoyed a prosperous, peace-time economy, low unemployment and high consumer confidence. In 2001, we were back in a recession and at war with terrorists. Over the years, however, despite those ups and downs, wildlife recreation has remained an important part of most Americans’ lives.

And as for me, based on this survey, I think I spent more than average — just on gas. — *Bob Mitchell*

letters

Editor:

Your editorial about the Wild Resource Conservation Fund was fine, but I think to support the fund the public would like to see a specific plan on how the various agencies are going to bring back many of the species of wildlife and plants that have been declining. The big question is can millions of dollars work a miracle or only bring small victories in the long-term decline?

M. HUNTZINGER,
SPRING GLEN

For information on Wild Resource Conservation Fund projects, visit www.dcnr.state.pa and then search for "Wild Resource Conservation Fund." You are right, though, in recognizing that to adequately manage and protect all of our state's wild animals and plants, substantial funding and a long, concerted effort by many agencies is necessary.

Editor:

A nonresident now, I still hunt in Pennsylvania. I also hunt in various other states, and in those states I've seen the results that Dr. Gary Alt is pursuing. We, as hunters, need to give this new program a chance, and if we know of noncompliance, we need to act accordingly.

J.G. FOUSE
POLAND, OH

many people I know collect Game News and like to store them in your binders.

W. EVANS
ORBISONIA

A year or so ago, while we were looking into changing the size of Game News, we let our supply of binders run out, because we didn't know if we would be going to a larger size. Since then, largely because of a survey conducted in which subscribers overwhelming indicated a preference for our current size, we've decided to keep our traditional format. We're again looking into having binders made. Watch Game News for an announcement of when they're available.

Editor:

During last year's late flintlock season, I found an old metal sign on SGL 175. The sign is about 10 x 12 inches, and it read, "State Game Refuge, Hunting is Unlawful, Pennsylvania Game Commission." Can you provide any information on the history and age of this sign?

Thank you.

M.C. DAVIS
YARDLEY

The Game Commission started the refuge system in 1906. Refuges were closed to hunting, and served to provide places where game animals

could multiply and expand into surrounding areas. Refuges were delineated with a single strand of wire and posted with metal signs. Outliving its usefulness, the refuge program was phased out about 20 years ago, but old signs and wire can occasionally be found.

Editor:

I am a nonresident, and I'm sorry to say I will no longer be hunting in Pennsylvania. With doe season combined with buck season, last year residents got every antlerless deer license in the county where I hunt, and I don't see that changing this year. The new rules made the \$100 nonresident license a gamble, and with this year's new antler restrictions, the chances of seeing a legal buck are greatly diminished.

J. SANGREGORY
SPENCERPORT, NY

True, last year's concurrent antlered and antlerless seasons resulted in an increased demand for antlerless deer licenses, and many hunters — residents and nonresidents — were unable to get them like they had in the past. This year's allocation is up substantially, though, which will give all hunters more opportunity. As for the antler restrictions, they apply to nonresidents and residents alike, and we all stand to benefit from them in the coming years.

Your comments are welcome. Mail them to "Letters," 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Letters will be edited for brevity and clarity.

Editor:

I was sorry to learn you no longer have binders for storing Game News. I and

The Vandals

Mike Doherty

Dauphin County WCO

PROTECTING wildlife habitat is just as important — maybe more important — as protecting wildlife itself. That's why WCOs and Food and Cover Corps workers spend so much time on game lands, enhancing their suitability for wildlife, as well as keeping them safe and attractive for hunters and other visitors. Most people realize that our game lands system is unique, and they treat these lands with respect, but not everyone.

One of the jewels in the game lands system is SGL 211, just north of Harrisburg. Stretching from the Susquehanna River some 30 miles east into Lebanon County, this large forested tract is home to deer, bears, turkeys, coyotes and grouse, with huge stands of hemlocks shading the trout-rich waters of Stony Creek. All year long the parking lot near Dauphin is often filled with the cars of hunters, hikers and other users. Sportsmen's organizations such as the NWTF and Trout Unlimited volunteer their energy and money to improve the habitat. I take my three children there regularly, and my son Bill did his first squirrel hunting along Stony Creek. That's why it broke my heart when I pulled into the parking lot one day and saw what someone had done.

The first thing I noticed were the profanities spray-painted on the trees. The white paint almost glowed against the dark bark of the hemlocks. At least a dozen trees and rocks had been marred, with 6-foot high words and phrases. The profanity was accompanied by obscene illustrations. The

ground was also littered with broken glass.

Why would anyone want to destroy this beautiful place? What pleasure could they get? Questions are fruitless, but I ask them anyway.

I shot a roll of film, recording every damaged tree and painted rock. One of the illustrations contained a circle with the letter A in it. Also, the words "POOH BEAR" were painted on one of the rocks. On another were the words "I LOVE CHARLIE B." On one huge hemlock, something else had been written that I couldn't quite make out, mixed in with the profanities. I walked around the tree, crunching glass underfoot, looking at it from all sides, and letting the light strike it from different angles. It was a name, a woman's name. We'll call her Jane Doe.

It seemed clear that Jane Doe was not the artist, because most of the profanity was about her. The artist clearly did not have good feelings for Jane.

I looked at the broken glass, hoping to find a fragment large enough for a fingerprint, but most of the pieces had been shattered into tiny fragments. I thought it was strange that these bottles, about two dozen, had been smashed so completely, as though they had exploded.

I walked in the forest around the parking lot, looking for anything that might have been thrown in the woods. About 30 yards away, half buried in the leaves, I found a broken piece of wood, about a foot long and painted black. It had the heft and feel of a broken pool cue, and was marked with a blue figure eight insignia. Judging by the grooves cut into the grip, it was evidently a handle to something. I thought it was one half of a pair of nunchaku, a mar-

tial arts weapon consisting of two pieces of wood joined by a short chain.

Back at my truck I did an inventory of what I had: Pooh Bear. Charlie B. The circled A. A black, broken nunchaku. Jane Doe. I pulled out a Harrisburg phone book that I keep in my truck. There were about a hundred Does listed, but no Jane.

I figured the people I was looking for were probably in their late teens or early 20s, so I decided to check with local school districts for a Jane Doe. The next day, I visited a nearby high school, and the administrator recognized Jane Doe's name immediately. He told me that Jane dropped out of school in her senior year, at the age of 18, and was now living in Harrisburg. I showed him the photographs, the circled A in particular, and asked if I could speak to the school's art teachers. He said he would have to check and get back to me.

On they way out, I encountered the assistant superintendent. When I explained why I was there, she told me the school would cooperate with me. I took this as bad news, however, because in my experience, people who tell me they are going to cooperate usually don't; people who are cooperating don't need to tell you they are cooperating.

A large mural was hanging in the lobby, and down in one corner of the painting was a circled A. I casually asked the assistant super who had painted the mural. She said she wasn't sure, that the mural had been there for a few years. The school never called me back to chat with the art teachers.

Next I went to Jane's house, and when



I told her what was written on the trees, she volunteered to go look at the site. Late that night, after she got off work, Jane and her boyfriend met me at the game lands parking lot. I gave her my big, 5-cell flashlight, and I could see her face growing more and more angry and hurt as she read the terrible words on the trees, in the dark and empty parking lot. I felt compassion for her.

"I think I know who did this," she said. She had recently had a fight with a friend of hers, Lucy. Lucy's nickname was Pooh Bear, and she had been an art student in high school before she, too, dropped out. She hung out with her brother Linus, a woman named Violet, a young man named Schroeder, and her boyfriend Charlie Brown.

They might also be involved, Jane said, although Charlie no longer lived in the area. Jane said that Lucy often signed her artwork with the circled A, which was a symbol for anarchy. As a matter of fact, she said, some of Lucy's artwork was still hanging in the hallway at the local high school.

I showed Jane the black piece of wood I had found, and asked if she knew what it was.

"That's Linus's nunchaku. His mother gave it to him as a birthday present." She went on to tell me that Linus was a black-belt martial arts expert who was on probation because he beat up some guy who had been harassing a young woman in a bar. I thanked her for her help, and assured her that I would do my best to find out who did this.

If Linus was on probation for aggravated assault, I doubted that he would be allowed to possess nunchaku. Furthermore, I thought he would probably be willing to cooperate with me, to show his probation officer what a good citizen he had become. I called the local office of the state parole board and asked them to set up a meeting for me with Linus.

Meanwhile, Deputy Fred Hanosky and I went to have a chat with Violet, who lived in Dauphin, near the only road to the game lands parking lot. Violet told us that Linus, Schroeder and Lucy had stopped by her house one night, and told her that they were going out to break some bottles in the woods. Lucy had just had an argument with Jane, and wanted to vent her anger.

A few days later, I met with Linus

and his parole agent. I explained the situation to the parole agent while Linus was taking his mandatory drug test. The agent was concerned to see the broken nunchaku; Linus was prohibited from possessing weapons of any sort. However, we both felt that Linus could probably stay out of jail if he cooperated. I asked what he was on parole for, and she informed me that Linus had beat up a female nurse while he was in drug rehab. She laughed when I told her the story about the young woman in a bar, and his black belt. So much for chivalry, I guess.

When Linus came back I showed him the broken nunchaku. I explained that I hadn't checked it for fingerprints yet, but that the smooth painted wood was a great surface for fingerprints, and if the owner were a convicted criminal, then it would be easy to get a match. "It's mine," he admitted.

I asked him how it came to be in the woods in Stony Valley. Linus told me that his sister Lucy and Schroeder had been drinking one night, and that Lucy was mad about a fight she had had with Jane. Lucy wanted to go break some bottles because she was mad, so she, Linus and Schroeder drove to SGL 211. Before they left, Lucy got a can of spray paint from the garage and put it in the car.

Linus said that once they got to the parking lot he took a walk by himself, and when he came back, all the bottles had been broken and the trees painted. He didn't see anyone actually do the damage, and didn't do any himself. Just an innocent bystander, he claimed.

Linus's story sounded suspiciously like stories I've heard from poachers over the years. They go something like this: "Yeah officer, I was in the truck with the spotlight and rifle, sitting in the passenger seat,



but I was asleep the whole time. When I woke up there was a dead deer in the back, but I have no idea how it got there.”

I reminded Linus that it was against the law to lie to law enforcement officers, and suggested he take a moment to think about the importance of honesty. He then admitted breaking some of the bottles and painting one of the trees. His sister Lucy did nearly all the spray painting. He told me that they used the nunchaku to break the bottles — which explained their exploded appearance. Furthermore, Schroeder had broken his nunchaku when he used it to hit a rock. Linus was upset, because Schroeder hadn’t paid him back for the damage.

I asked Linus to write this down for me and explained that he would be charged for dumping trash — the bottles — and for boisterous, immoral or indecent conduct on state game lands; a total of \$400 in fines. He told me he would plead guilty. I finished the interview and thanked him for cooperating. Just then a parole agent entered the room and informed Linus that he had failed his drug test. Linus was handcuffed and taken back to jail while I went off to find Schroeder and Lucy.

I found Schroeder at his job at a local supermarket. We went to the break room, he confessed his role, telling me a story identical to Linus’s. Schroeder knew he had done a dumb thing, and seemed genuinely sorry. Like Linus, Schroeder pled guilty and paid \$400 in fines.

Now it was time to talk to Lucy. When I went to her home she wasn’t there, but while chatting with her father I could plainly see a jacket hanging by the door. On the back were the words “POOH BEAR.” He told me Lucy lived elsewhere, and gave me the address.

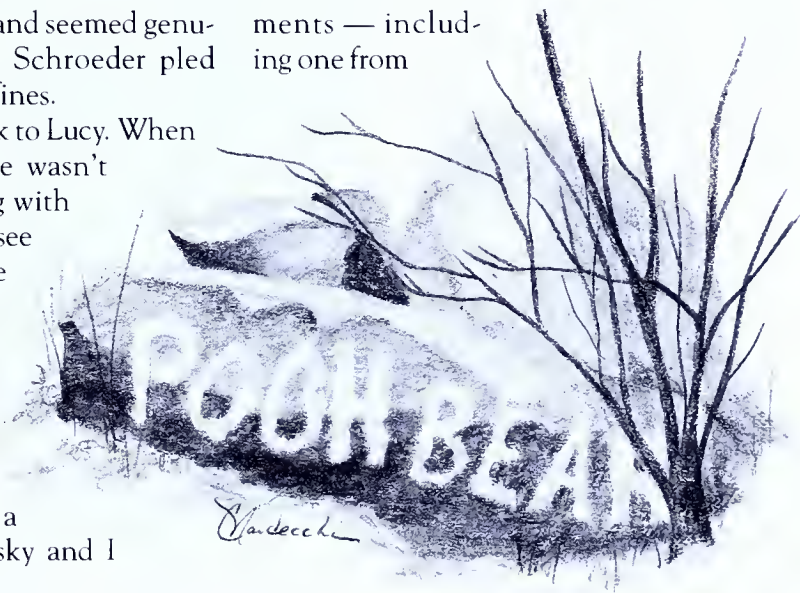
At about 2 p.m. on a Saturday, Deputy Hanosky and I

went to speak to Lucy. We knocked on the door several times before a sleepy young man opened it. I identified ourselves and asked if Lucy was home. He said she was, that she was in bed. He offered to go wake her. I asked if they worked at night. He said they didn’t work, that Lucy was an artist. I told him I had seen some of her art.

Lucy came down, rubbing her eyes. I showed her the pictures of the vandalism and asked if she wanted to tell me anything about them. She said she didn’t know a thing about it, and had never been to Stony Valley. She said she had never heard of Charlie Brown, the fellow who was supposed to be her boyfriend. She said she didn’t know anything about Pooh Bear. Didn’t know any Jane Doe, and she never used the circle-A symbol in her art.

I pointed out that I saw her jacket at her parents’ house. She suddenly remembered that her nickname was Pooh Bear, but didn’t know anything about anything else. I told her I saw the circle-A at her high school, on a painting, but she just shrugged her shoulders.

I gave her my card and told her to think about the situation. I told her I had four sworn statements — including one from



her own brother — who either saw her do the vandalism or heard her talk about it. I reminded her that lying to a law enforcement officer was illegal, and that this was her chance to tell the truth. Deputy Hanosky and I then left.

After a week, I filed charges. Based on the evidence, Lucy's role in the damage was greater than Linus or Schroeder, both of whom had told the truth. It was Lucy who made a point to bring the spray paint. It was Lucy who painted most of the obscenities. 't was Lucy who brought the bottles for the purpose of breaking them, and she had continued to lie.

In addition to what Linus and Schroeder were charged, Lucy was charged with false statements to an of-

ficer, and transporting trash to state game lands. Additionally, she was assessed damages for what she had done. Her fines totaled more than \$900. I typed up the charges, dropped them off at the district court, and started preparing for a trial.

A few weeks later, however, I received a letter from the district court: Lucy had pled guilty to everything and paid the fine in full. The case was closed.

I went to the Stony Valley parking lot soon afterwards. The Food and Cover crew had cleaned up most of the damage. I'm sure they were frustrated at spending time and energy cleaning up after vandals, instead of working to improve wildlife habitat. The profanities on the trees had been painted over, but the paint and the damage is still visible. It will be for a long time. □

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Becoming an Outdoors-Woman in Pennsylvania

By Lori Richardson

PGC Outreach Coordinator

Photos by Larissa Rose

IN THE EARLY 1990s I was taking courses to fulfill my wildlife biology degree at Michigan State University. I was enjoying courses such as Upland Wildlife Management, Zoology, and Human Dimensions of Wildlife Management. I was reading Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac* as class material, and backpacking the Canadian Rockies for credit. I was looking forward to spending my career in the great outdoors, not being stuck behind a desk in some stuffy office.

I hadn't fished since I was about eight, and had never hunted anything other than mosquitoes during scavenger hunts at summer camp. My classmates and professors, it seemed, had been hunting and fishing most of their lives. Classmates would frequently offer, "Come along with us, it's a blast!" Later I'd hear about the exciting quests I'd missed out on.

I just wasn't in the loop. I wanted so badly to join my peers on their fabulous adventures, but I didn't own any equipment and I didn't have

the right clothes. I didn't have the know-how to purchase what I needed — let alone the money to buy it. I didn't know enough to set out on my own. I needed a mentor to teach me and a place to learn.

Little did I know, at about that same time, at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, a conference was taking place to find out why women are underrepresented in the hunting and fishing communities. The professionals at the meeting identified

several barriers preventing women from getting involved in outdoor sports. The *Becoming an Outdoors-Woman®* (BOW) program was born.

That was more than 10 years ago. Today, I coordinate the *Becoming an Outdoors-Woman* program in Pennsylvania. I'm still learning to shoot, hunt and fish. I'm still learning about wildlife and wildlife management. And, unfortunately, most days I'm stuck behind a desk in an office. But, not many



FISHING IS just one of the skills women can learn at the BOW weekend in September.



BEYOND BOW workshops are held throughout the year to dedicate a day to just one activity, such as canoeing.

people can enjoy a day out shooting, fishing or mountain biking with a group of women as part of their job as I do. I'm helping women just like me learn the outdoor skills they've been longing to discover and adopt; helping them find ways to connect with the natural world around them and become part of that circle of life.

The Pennsylvania *Becoming an Outdoors-Woman* program offers year-round courses to women 18 years of age and older. How do you know if BOW is for you? Are you interested in learning new outdoor skills or enhancing your current abilities? BOW can guide you. Would you like to sample a new outdoor activity without purchasing new equipment? BOW is the place to do it. Do you enjoy the camaraderie of like-minded women? BOW is just what you've been looking for.

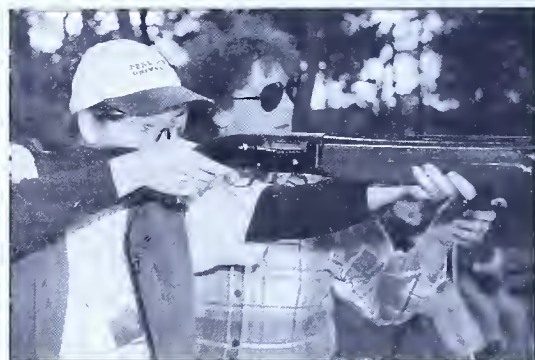
The BOW environment is non-competitive, supportive and encouraging, so don't be intimidated, register for an event that interests you. Courses are designed for beginners and our instructors are patient and enthusiastic. BOW uses lots of hands-on teaching, so you'll really get a taste of the activities that spark your spirit. Equipment is provided for use during workshops, so you don't have to spend a lot of money only to find out that a

particular activity just isn't for you. Course fees are reasonable and scholarships are available for some workshops, so pick an event, start saving your change, and join us!

BOW's next big event will take place September 20-22, at Camp Saginaw in Oxford, Chester County. More than 20 classes will be offered in shooting, hunting, fishing, boating, and other outdoor activities such as nature photography, forestry and backyard wildlife. One hundred women will be able to participate in the inspirational weekend that begins with lunch on Friday and ends with lunch on Sunday. During the course of their stay, participants will take four classes of their choice. Meals, housing, instruction and equipment are all included in the registration fee, and scholarships are available for those in need. Registration is expected to begin in July.

Join us for an adventure. You'll never be the same!

To find out about the fall workshop and other BOW events, visit the "Hunting Information" site on the Game Commission home page at www.pgc.state.pa.us, and select "Becoming an Outdoors-Woman," and check out the Upcoming Events page, or email PA BOW at pa-bow@state.pa.us, or contact the Pennsylvania Game Commission's Outreach Coordinator at 717-705-9350. □



SHOOTING SPORTS are becoming more and more popular among women, and BOW provides an opportunity to try them, without spending money on equipment.

Deer Association's Commitment to Habitat

By C.D. Denmon

AS THE SUN broke the early morning mist a group of dedicated sportsmen were eager to get to work. The group would be pruning apple trees in an old orchard on SGL 13 in Sullivan County. This project is one of many performed by members of the Pennsylvania Deer Association (PDA).

The PDA is a pro-hunting, environmental organization found in 1975 and dedicated to white-tailed deer and their habitat. This organization is also involved with many deer related issues, such as hunting seasons and the human controversies with deer. PDA is also a strong believer in getting more youngsters involved in hunting.

Just recently the PDA has taken a stronger, more active role in developing habitat. Members create habitat not only for deer, but for many species of wildlife. Projects include apple tree pruning, tree planting, the construction of deer exclosures for study purposes, the planting of food plots, and

block and border timber cuts.

The PDA is a statewide organization that is broken up into six regional divisions. The Northeast Region is leading the way in habitat improvement, and the best part is that all of the projects take place on state game lands.

Apple tree pruning projects take place during the winter and end just before the trees bud out. After that the planting season begins. Recently, the PDA worked on installing deer exclosures. These fenced areas serve as study areas for biologists and observation areas for sportsmen to see the effects of over-browsing. The block and border cuts, which take place during late winter, provide browse for deer during the most stressful time of the year.

The PDA also works with members of the National Wild Turkey Federation on habitat projects. The Northeast Region's habitat coordinator plans on working with several organizations, so each group can help the other on their specific projects. This habitat



PDA member DALE BUTLER, above, uses a pole pruner to remove high hanging limbs from an apple tree. Member TIM MACIEJCZAK works at clearing dead wood from an old tree to improve its fruit production for wildlife.



ARTIST JACK PALUH is proud to join forces with The Pennsylvania Deer Association (PDA) in creating "Breaking Cover." The PDA is dedicated to supporting our young hunters, and promotes quality deer management, as well as encouraging adult and youngster participation. Each print purchased through the PDA will include a complimentary one-year membership to the organization. With the help of today's sportsmen, we can better maintain a quality of excellence in deer management.



Approximate image size of print is 17½ x 22 inches; 850 signed and numbered prints cost \$125 each; 95 artist proofs are available for \$175 each. To order contact: The Pennsylvania Deer Association, Inc., 215 Hunters Road, Newville, PA 17241-9422; phone: 717-776-7248.

coalition accomplishes a lot of work in the region.

As another example of our partnership, the Northeast Region brought in a local Boy Scout troop to work on an apple tree pruning project. This allowed the PDA to accomplish more work and the scouts earned credit towards a merit badge. In addition, the young men learned how to care for wildlife habitat.

Although the Game Commission supplies most project materials, the PDA uses a portion of its money to provide lunch for its volunteers, and to purchase other materials and tools as needed.

The projects are supported through the PDA's banquets, raffles and merchandise sales. As long as men and

women support and become members of the PDA, these habitat projects will continue to flourish. The pruning of apple trees



TREE TUBES protect newly planted seedlings from browsing deer, and they speed the growth of the tree by trapping moisture.

on state game lands has been termed "Pruning for Wildlife" by the Game Commission. This differs from commercial pruning for several reasons. The first is that a neglected tree should not be pruned all at once. Pruning should be spaced out over three years. Second, if woodpeckers are using the dead wood on a tree, that part is left intact. In addition, any pieces of dead wood that have any cavities that may be used as nesting sites for birds or other animals also stay intact.

Planting seedlings is another important aspect of the PDA's habitat projects. Oak, chestnut, crabapple, white spruce and Scotch pine are just a few of the varieties the PDA has planted. Tree tubes should be used around deciduous trees to protect young trees from deer and rabbits. The tubes also act as a green house and collect moisture that keep the roots moist even in dry weather. Netting should be placed over the tubes to prevent birds from becoming trapped inside them.

In the Northeast Region alone, volunteers of PDA have planted several hundred trees in the last three years. The PDA is looking to expand the amount of projects in the coming years, which makes it important for new members and volunteers to get involved in this worthwhile organization.

The PDA is currently seeking new mem-



Habitat improvement projects like the kinds the Pennsylvania Deer Association is involved in go a long way in helping to produce top quality deer like this Lancaster County 9-point taken with a bow by DENISE RAUM from Kinzers.

bers to help promote the future of hunting and support its habitat projects. If you would like more information on the organization, contact Jim Seitz at 215 Hunters Road, Newville, PA 17241-9422 or by phone at (717) 776-7248. Jim can direct you to a regional director that may have a project scheduled in your area. □

Trophy of a Lifetime

By Larry Adams

Photos by the author

WHEN HE began filling out his elk license application, Mike Bradley had no idea of the once-in-a-lifetime experience awaiting him. Having grown up in wildlife rich southwestern Pennsylvania, Mike began hunting with his father 34 years ago. His interest in the outdoors led him to Penn State University, where he earned a degree in Parks and Recreation. His biggest thrill was seeing his son get his first buck. His best personal hunting accomplishment has been harvesting bucks in Maryland, West Virginia and Pennsylvania within seven days in 1989.

Married with three children, Mike had never hunted elk and didn't expect to do so until his children were grown. However, \$10 for a chance at a Pennsylvania elk hunt was too hard to resist. Mike applied, even though his wife Lorraine wasn't so sure she liked the idea of a huge elk mount hanging in the house. Ironically, Steve Donachy, one of the Elk County folks who had a guide license and, as it turned out, would help guide Mike on his hunt, drew Mike's name from the barrel. Mike learned of his good fortune from his brother, who had been told by a friend who saw Mike's name listed as one of the "lucky 30" in a Pittsburgh newspaper. A call to the Game Commission confirmed his good fortune, and written notification and a packet of information arrived a few days later.



From the beginning it was important to Mike that he share the hunt with his 19-year-old son Mike Jr. and other family members. He immediately tried to contact his brothers-in-law, Carl and Dale Pletcher, and their relation Brian Pletcher for advice, even though they were in Wyoming hunting antelope and mule deer at the time. Those three had hunted elk out West, and had agreed to accompany Mike on his Pennsylvania hunt.

Several guides from Elk County contacted Mike, but after checking with the Elk County Chamber of Commerce and making a preliminary visit, Mike hired Mark and Joe Rupprecht of Quehanna Outfitters — who own Elk County Arms and Ammo — and their friend Steve Donachy, to direct the hunt and secure permission to hunt on private property. Cindy Ross, a writer on assignment from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and myself, an outdoor columnist, completed Mike's hunting party.

Mike made sure his 7mm Magnum, as well as a .300 Savage as a backup, were sighted in, and the necessary gear for a week's hunt was carefully chosen and packed. At 6:30 a.m. on Sunday, November 11, 2001, the party left Sculton, Somerset County, for Saint Mary's.

The Game Commission held a mandatory 3-hour orientation session for the 30 elk hunters and substitutes on that Sunday afternoon before the Monday season opener. The orientation consisted of an overview of Pennsylvania's elk herd by Rawley Cogan, and then discussions on hunter ethics, safety, rules of the hunt, shot placement, field care of harvested animals, and a question and answer session. At the conclusion of the orientation, the 30 hunters purchased their licenses, and the guides picked up their permits. Our group then rushed out for a drive to the Benezette area. We saw several elk just before dark, but they were near the viewing area, which was off limits to hunters. Nonetheless, our anticipation and expectations ran high as darkness shrouded the mountains of Elk County.

Sleep was hard to come by for Mike that night, and he was up at 3 o'clock to make sure everyone else was up. Gear was gathered and put into the trucks, and then we all headed out to the arranged meeting place.

The guides had been scouting several farms in the area Mike was licensed to hunt, but they had not seen any elk there for a week. At daylight the group gathered along the edge of some fields where a pipeline ran through a mixed forest interspersed with some food plots that often attracted elk. There weren't any, however, so Mike and one of the guides were placed on stand at an old beaver dam, while the other guides pushed through the surrounding woods in hopes of pushing elk towards him.

Elk rubs, old tracks and droppings were evident, but none were fresh and no elk were seen. The group checked other areas, but to no avail until, finally, the guides jumped a small band of elk near a Game Commission food plot, but they promptly ran across a drainage and out of Mike's hunting area.

The hunt went this way for the first three days. On the fourth morning, we started out in a new area and immediately noticed fresh sign and heard an elk bugling in the distance. A couple of turkey hunters and a logger pinpointed where the bugles were coming from. With Mike watching an open piece of woods near a forest road, the guides jumped about a dozen elk, but they, too, slipped around the hunter. We heard more bugling, just over the next ridge. It was decided that one guide would work towards the bugling from one end of the ridge, while Mike, young Mike, and two other guides would try to close the distance to the bugling bull more directly from farther up the ridge. With the wind in their faces, Mike, his son, and



Elk County WCO DOTY MCDOWELL with MIKE BRADLEY and Mike's impressive 8x7 bull elk.

ELK LICENSE APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

The elk license application can be completed in the following ways:

1. Use the Game Commission's e-commerce site. Go to www.pgc.state.pa.us and click on "The Outdoor Shop." Complete the form and submit your credit card information. E-commerce applications will be accepted through Sept. 13, 2002.
2. Use the form in the *Pennsylvania Digest of Hunting & Trapping Regulations*. Provide all the required information, enclose a check or money order for the nonrefundable \$10 fee and mail to the PGC by Aug. 23, 2002.
3. Use the application form found on the PGC website www.pgc.state.pa.us. Print the form, provide all required information, enclose a check or money order for the nonrefundable \$10 fee and mail to the PGC by Aug. 23, 2002.

When completing your elk license application in any form, you will have the option of applying for only an antlered license; only an antlerless license; or "either" license. Antlered licenses will be assigned first. If you select "Antlered Only" and are drawn after all antlered licenses have been assigned, you will not receive an elk license. You will also have a first and second choice in the Elk Management Area you wish to hunt in. You may also select the option for taking any area. A map and a description of the Elk Management Areas can be found in the digest. Only one application per person can be submitted. The drawing to select the 70 "winners" will be held Saturday, Sept. 28, 2002.

two guides got to within 200 yards of a large herd of bedded elk along the top of the ridge. Almost immediately Mike and Joe spotted the antlers of what appeared to be a huge bull bedded with two cows.

Mike had to wait for the bull to stand to get a good shot, so he and Joe crouched down, with Steve and young Mike a short distance behind. A half hour later nothing had changed and nerves were stretched to the breaking point. Something had to be done to get the elk up, so Steve slowly circled downwind, thinking his scent would cause the bull to stand. As Steve circled he jumped two other large bulls and several cows that Mike saw but didn't have a clear shot at. Disturbing those elk, or the wind carrying scent towards the others, worked, however, as the cows and the bull got up. Mike fired and the woods came alive with elk running everywhere. Distracted by so many elk and losing sight of the bull

he had shot at, Mike could only hope that his bullet had been on target. Joe, Mike, Mike Jr. and Steve all converged on the area where the big bull had been. As they approached, huge antlers appeared to be growing up from the ground only 10 yards from where the bull had stood at the shot, and Mike had lived every elk hunter's dream.

While Mike is justifiably proud of taking one of the largest elk of the hunt, he values the experience of participating in such a historic event with his family and friends more than the actual taking of a magnificent animal. Mike also appreciated the help of the Elk County folks, the Game Commission, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and all the sportsmen's clubs, and individuals who not only made his hunt possible, but who also have made it possible for everyone to enjoy the elk herd, one of Pennsylvania's outstanding wildlife resources. □

The dog who meets with a good master is the happier of the two. — Maurice Maeterlinck

A Little Help from Man's Best Friend

By Larissa Rose

PGC Information Writer

Photos by the author

THEY CAN FIND a shell casing in a 60-by-60-foot hay field in less than three minutes. They can sniff out an illegal duck hidden in the weeds. And if you're trying to elude them, they can find you no matter where you might hide, and all the evidence you've stashed along the way. They're the newest Game Commission investigators, and they're unlike any we've ever had before.

In October 2000, the Board of Commissioners approved a 3-year pilot program to use dogs for wildlife law enforcement. Southcentral Region Director Willis Sneath, and Steve Lapp of Petersburg, Huntingdon County, donated two Labrador retriever puppies, and the program was off and running. Labrador retrievers were selected because of their intelligence and trainability; they are fairly long-lived and healthy; are recognized by sportsmen; and are well behaved around other dogs, which they're likely to encounter in the field.

In March 2001, canine Sarge, a 5-month-old yellow Lab was assigned to WCO Darrin Clark of Erie County, and 4-month-old Onyx, a black Lab, went home with WCO Linda Swank of Lancaster County. Darrin and Linda were selected from several interested officers in the Northwest and Southeast regions,

largely because of their experience with dogs. Darrin trains and competes with golden retrievers, while Linda trains and competes with Labrador retrievers.

Rich Palmer, Training Supervisor, was assigned as manager of the pilot program, because of his experience as a canine handler and kennel master for the U.S. Air Force. For the Game Commission, he modeled our canine



RICH PALMER, manager of the canine program, spent part of the first training session giving the handlers instructions on how to care for the dogs. Here he shows WCO LINDA SWANK how to check the pads on ONYX's feet.



THE CONSERVATION OFFICERS OF PENNSYLVANIA (COPA) donated \$3,500 to the 3-year pilot program, some of which was spent on materials to build an obstacle course, used to practice obedience and physical training for various terrain and situation exercises. The course was built by DUSTY MITCHELL and ROY MANUM, PGC maintenance specialists.



certification requirements after the North American Police Working Dog Association's Wildlife Detector Dog Standards. Using those national standards to demonstrate credibility of the canines helps establish probable cause to, for example, obtain search warrants.

After a 3-week bonding period, the handlers and K-9 partners began the first training session. The week-long class focused on the dogs' care and maintenance, gave the handlers instruction on training basic obedience, and introduced the dogs to tracking and evidence recovery exercises. Despite their young age, the dogs did exceptionally well. After the training, the handlers worked with the dogs every day, exercising the skills they had just been taught.

Anyone who has ever owned a dog understands the commitment involved, with the daily exercising and grooming, as well as frequent vet appointments. Linda and Darrin, however, also have to work on developing the dogs' tracking and searching skills, and attend training sessions, as well as additional educational program presentations at schools and events.



When the teams returned for the second round of training, in June, it was obvious they had been working hard. This second week-long session worked on honing the scenting skills of the now 8- and 9-month-old canines.

A dog's sense of smell is about 400 times stronger than a human's. Onyx and Sarge are being trained to find "anything that doesn't belong:" shell casings, knives, hidden firearms, just about anything that might be left behind at a crime scene. Upon finding an object, the dogs have been trained to lie down with it between their front paws. This lets the handler know the dog has found something, yet keeps both of them out of danger. If the dog were trained to retrieve found objects, they could be cut, shot, or injured by any



WCO DARRIN CLARK and SARGE practice tracking. Sarge is wearing one of the bullet proof vests donated by Safari Club International and an organization called Vested Heroes that provides the vests to police service dogs.

other means. To be certified in this task, the canines must search a minimum 60-by-60-foot area with at least 10-inch high vegetation, and find at least three articles in five minutes. The same task would take several officers, with metal detectors, many hours.

One of the most impressive skills these trained dogs possess is their ability to track people. They can follow a trail by smelling either skin cells, which are continually falling off the subject, or by differences in crushed vegetation and disturbed soils. Depending on conditions (wet weather holds the scent better than dry), the canines can easily follow tracks several hours old. Older tracks are more difficult to follow, because most of the human scent has dissipated. That's when the dogs must detect differences in the ground. To be certified in tracking, the dogs must follow a track at least one hour old, has three turns, is at least a quarter of a mile long, has two surface types, and has one fresh track crossing the original at least 15 minutes after the original is laid.

The canines' scenting abilities are also used to locate illegal wildlife. Onyx and Sarge are primarily trained to seek out deer, bear and turkey, but they can also be trained to search for waterfowl and other species. When the dogs pick up the scent,

they are trained to sit. To be certified in detection, the dogs must search an open outdoor area at least 150 square yards; a vehicle, which may include boats; and one other area, such as a building, package or cooler. Scent material for deer, bear and other large specimens must weigh at least one-half pound and come from the upper torso of the animal. For smaller species, the dogs are trained to locate items only an ounce or so. For certification, the canines must score at least 91.6 percent.

During the first year, to work with the puppies' short attention spans, one-week training sessions were held every three months. This past April, the teams completed an intense, 7-week training, in which they passed certification.

Darrin and Linda have also been showing off their dogs at schools, sportsmen's clubs and other gatherings, including the 2001 Elk Festival, the Pymatuning Waterfowl Expo, and the PA Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs statewide conference.

The canine teams were put to good use during the 2001-02 hunting season. From the end of October through the middle of December, the teams assisted with 13 cases in three regions and six counties. Between the two, they performed three tracking duties and five evidence searches, resulting in 12 charges.

In one instance, a man coming out of the woods in full camouflage, including face paint and gloves, was stopped by a WCO. The man wasn't wearing a hunting license, didn't have a gun or bow, and claimed he wasn't hunting. The man was allowed to leave, but the officer called for the canine team to search for a bow or rifle

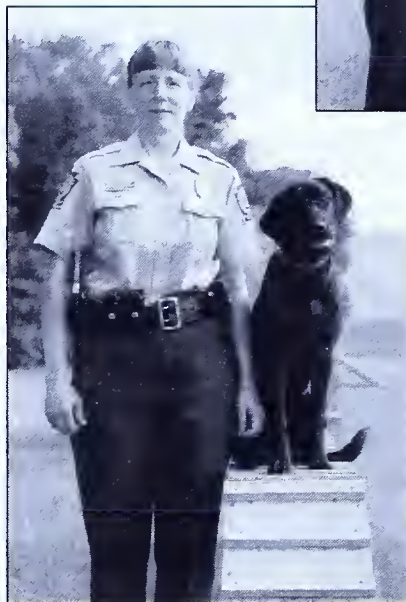
he was suspected to have stashed in the woods.

WCO Swank and Onyx began by backtracking from where the man entered his vehicle, and after going about 30 yards, Onyx located a compound bow along the roadside, then continued on to where the suspect had exited the field.

The next day, it was learned that the suspect's hunting privileges had been revoked, so he was charged with hunting while on revocation and attempting to take deer unlawfully. Without Onyx, the bow may not have been recovered, and it would have been difficult to prove that the suspect had been hunting.

While the canine teams are valuable tools to be used to prove wrongdoings, they can also be used to exonerate suspects. For instance, a hunting-related shooting incident was reported, and WCO Clark and Sarge were brought in to search for a shotgun shell where the suspect was alleged to have shot. Sarge didn't recover any evidence, so a week later, they revisited the scene with the suspect, who claimed to have been standing in a different spot. While searching that area, Sarge located a AA Winchester shotgun shell that backed up the suspect's story. Once that location was determined, a shot pattern was found in the trees, proving that he fired al-

WCOs DARRIN CLARK and LINDA SWANK were selected in 2001 to be the first two handlers for the Game Commission's 3-year pilot canine program. SARGE was assigned to Clark in Erie County, and ONYX joined Swank in Lancaster County.



most 140 degrees in the opposite direction from where the victim was. While these facts didn't indicate who shot the victim, they did eliminate one suspect.

Without the increased evidence collection the canines provide, these cases

may have been written off as unsolvable. "Canine teams are a valuable asset to conservation law enforcement efforts," says Palmer. "They provide a significant increase in the protection of the wildlife resource through enhanced evidence recovery and high visibility deterrence."

Once the 3-year pilot program has ended, the commission will be given a report detailing the use of the teams. If it is then decided that the program should be continued, and adding more teams would be beneficial, Palmer would eventually like to see two teams in each of the six regions.

After more than 20 years of attempts to start a canine program, the collective effort of several individuals is making this idea a reality. □

Lost on Jacks Mountain

By Lori Luckenbaugh

HAVING RECEIVED permission to run our dogs on some really good property, Frank and I decided that after milking one night we'd take advantage of the landowner's generosity, and loaded up the dogs to see if we could tree some coons.

Around 11:30 we dropped off Timber, a Walker; Aurora, a bluetick; and Cherokee, a 5-year-old bluetick in training. With the moon out and shining brightly, we could see pretty well without our lights.

On the way in Frank found a den tree, and not far from it Timber struck a track. Cherokee, who had been following him, opened twice, and being so proud of herself, came back to us and hung by us from then on. Aurora, who had been checking out a field, came running in to join Timber.

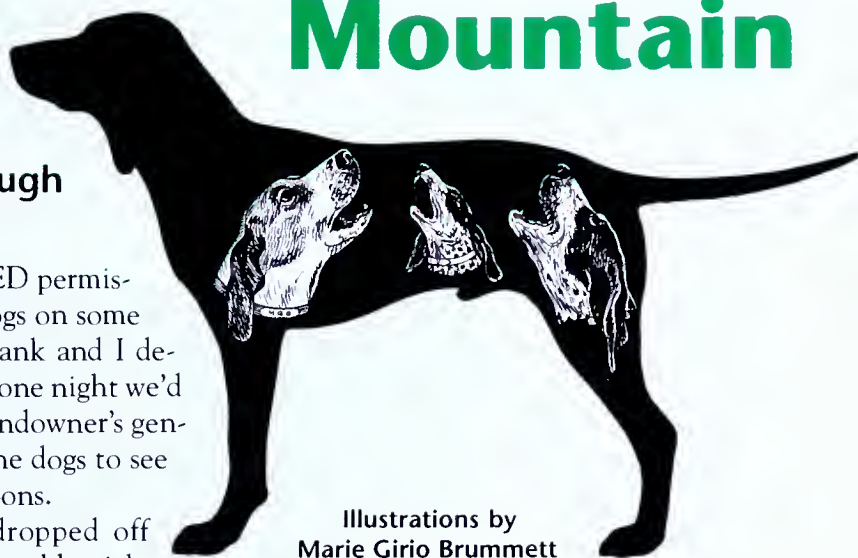
Timber and Aurora continued to work the track, circling the tree until they hit the hot scent, and then they were off. Down through the meadow, bawling to beat the band. They made a sharp left and headed down to the lower part of the mountain, to the east of the chicken houses. As they started back up the mountain I said to Frank, "We better get moving or it's gonna be a long night."

More true words have never been spoken. Frank and I entered the lower part of the mountain, just east of the chicken houses and started up an old logging road. We could hear the dogs, but we just couldn't get a fix on them. The wind had really kicked up and made them sound like

they were miles away. Going up a small incline I heard some rustling in the trees overhead, and my light revealed turkeys, lots of them.

On we went, ever higher, with the dogs howling up a storm. Then, about halfway up, my light died. Now what? Frank, who looked rather comical with headlamp, suspenders, bibs and dog leashes strapped every which way said, "I'll keep going. You walk back down and get the truck and head up to Ulsh Gap and see if you can get a fix on the dogs."

So, dutiful wife that I am, I turned and walked the mile or so back. This was a feat in itself, being without a light, and clouds now covering the moon. I was in a woods that I wasn't real familiar with, and wondering if I'd run into the bear that had been spotted here during bear season. To feel better, I talked to myself the whole way down, and yes, I answered myself, too. Back at the truck, I loaded up Cherokee, who promptly lay down and went to sleep, and then started up the mountain. It was now 12:45, and I wondered how we'd get up for church



Illustrations by
Marie Girio Brummett

in the morning. I got to the corner before Ulsh Gap and pulled into a little clearing, shut off the truck and listened. I couldn't hear the dogs, or anything else, except the wind blowing through the trees. Okay, now what? Maybe I needed to go in a little farther, so I hopped out, left the headlights on and walked in as far as I could with the lights shining a path for me. Nothing. No dogs, no Frank, only trees. I returned to the truck and went back down the mountain, then drove up an old logging road, hoping I'd spot Frank or at least hear the dogs. When I got to the small clearing where Frank and I had parted,

I could hear the dogs again. One minute they sounded close, but the next they seemed miles away; the wind was playing tricks. I heard Timber working back down towards me, but he suddenly veered off to my left and turned west toward the pig barns, so I took another logging road that looked like it went in that direction. It was 1:30 now, and I was tired but optimistic I would find them around the next bend, but all I saw were a couple deer.

I kept driving but the rough road made for slow going. I finally reached a dead end, and I had no choice but to turn around on the road no wider than the truck. My 3-point turn turned into 20, but I finally got headed back. I reached the clearing again and could hear Timber off in the distance. He was barking himself hoarse and Aurora sounded like a squeaky frog. It was now nearly 2 o'clock and I was

extremely tired. Where could they be? I decided to go back down to the main road, vowing I wouldn't go back up the mountain again.

Back to where we had first dropped off the dogs, I shut off the truck, but heard nothing. I then hollered for the dogs, but to no avail. I was beside myself. I thought about going home to call a friend of ours who has a search and rescue dog to track Frank down, but I knew Frank would never forgive me for doing that — a macho pride thing. I left my coat on the ground in case the dogs returned, and then I headed for the pig barns. Back and forth I drove, becoming more worried by the minute.

On about my fourth trip I topped a little rise and spotted Frank walking towards me, looking like he was about half dead. The dogs weren't with him, and when I got to him he crawled in the truck and told me to drive back home so he could charge his light and put warmer clothes on.

It was 3:30 when we got home, and after Frank headed out I hit the sack. I tried to sleep, but it just wouldn't happen. I was worried about Frank and the dogs. He came in about 5:30 and said he found Aurora lying on my coat where I had left it. Timber was still out there, though. Frank went to bed and got back up at 9:30 to look again. He found Timber at 10:30 at the landowner's house, playing with his dogs.

Our 11-hour hunt was finally over. We are pretty sure the dogs had been trailing an old boar coon, as they'll run for hours without treeing. I think Frank and I will be investing in a tracking system, 2-way radios and a lot more batteries for my flashlight in the future. □



Deer Management and the Concept of Change

By Bret D. Wallingford

PGC Deer Biologist

CHANGE. By nature, we tend to resist it. We find security in consistency, whether it is with our job, our church, where we live, or the friends we have. When we make a change, questions and uncertainties immediately rise. “Why am I making this change? What benefit will I see? What risks am I taking?”

We have all made serious changes in our lives, sometimes unknowingly, sometimes by force. A normal childhood progression is to go from crawling, to walking, to running, each time taking a risk. We make major life changes when we leave high school to join the military, enter the workforce, begin college, get married, and start a family. Every change involved a risk.

Like in life, we have made major changes to the way we manage deer, with by far the biggest and most controversial being this year’s new antler restrictions.

Each change involved a risk, but also benefits. As we developed these new deer management strategies, we felt there were two major problems that needed to be addressed, and both are linked to the deer hunting tradition that has been handed down from generation to generation.

Traditional Deer Management

It’s important to understand that our buck hunting tradition was born out of necessity. As the 20th century began, deer were at an all time low. We began protecting deer by enacting and enforcing game laws. When hunting was permitted, only bucks were fair game. This provided deer hunting opportunities while still allowing

the population to grow. As we quickly learned, deer populations in good habitat expand rapidly. By the end of the 1920s, much of the regenerating forests across northern Pennsylvania — the traditional deer range — had been severely overbrowsed. Still, other parts of the state had few if any deer. During the following decades, we continued to manage deer with unlimited buck hunting and severely limited antlerless deer hunting. As a result, in the minds of many hunters, antlerless deer were seen as a consolation prize, and this is a tradition that has been handed down over the years.

The Big Issues

The first biological problem we needed to address was the abundance of deer. Deer numbers are not all that we look at. We also look at conflicts between deer and society, and effects on habitat. Collisions with cars, agricultural damage, and browsed landscape shrubbery are some social conflicts we have with deer. These effects are readily seen, and they affect people. But one factor that is almost always overlooked is damage to our forests. Much of Pennsylvania has been, and is currently being overbrowsed by deer. This affects a host of other game species, including grouse, turkeys and bear, and also dozens of nongame species that depend on the herbaceous and shrub vegetation layers for escape cover, foraging

and nesting. When logging, or disturbances such as disease or major blowdowns occur in the forest, we all too often do not get adequate natural regeneration to restock the forest. While other factors such as forest insects and acid precipitation also affect forest regeneration, the impacts of deer are very profound. One only has to look inside exclosures that prevent deer from browsing inside them, but allow all other environmental factors to remain the same. Of the different factors that affect forest regeneration, deer abundance is one that we can manage for.

The second biological problem we needed to address was the high buck mortality rate. Steeped within our hunting tradition is the notion that if you see a buck with an antler three inches or longer, you shoot it. With upwards of a million deer hunters in this state, this tradition has resulted in most bucks being killed as yearlings, with only a few surviving into even just the 2- and 3-year age classes. When you consider that bucks do not reach their full body and antler potential until the age of 4, very few of our bucks reach maturity. Pennsylvania has had the highest yearling buck mortality in North America. A more natural breeding ecology, we believe, will result from a population with a higher proportion of bucks and an older male age structure.

Addressing the Problems

We felt that we needed to address deer population abundance first, and

With upwards of a million deer hunters in Pennsylvania, very few bucks reach maturity. The Keystone State has had the highest yearling buck mortality in North America. DR. GARY ALT shows what a year and a half old buck can achieve with another year or two.

that an adequate harvest of female deer is the way to do it. But again, traditionally, many hunters have been reluctant to kill antlerless deer. They didn't want to risk killing a male fawn that would have been next year's buck, or they consider antlerless deer a sort of consolation prize. Both issues needed to be addressed.

Significant changes to encourage more antlerless deer hunting began in 2000. Junior and senior license holders, and those with a Disabled Persons Permit to hunt from a vehicle were allowed to take antlerless deer during the entire 12-day antlered deer season. Antlerless season opened on a Saturday, the last day of "buck" season. Also new that year was the October flintlock season for antlerless deer.

In 2001, we expanded antlerless deer hunting opportunities further. Most significant was the concurrent antlered and antlerless deer season to all firearms hunters. Also, the October flintlock season was expanded from three to seven days, and junior and senior license holders could use modern firearms during the final three days. This allowed more time for hunters to harvest antlerless deer. Also, having longer seasons gave hunters time to be more selective. If they thought the deer could be a button buck, they could let it

Bob D'Angelo





The Game Commission made significant changes to encourage more antlerless deer hunting in recent years. Twelve-year-old BILLY EVERETT and 15-year-old sister MARIE took these antlerless deer during the October season.

go and hold out for a mature doe.

For 2002, the second problem, high buck mortality was addressed, when the Board passed new antler restrictions. Aside from the exceptions of junior and disabled hunters, armed services personnel, and those in the Special Regulation counties, the rest of us will have to change the way we approach deer hunting. Hunters will have to look more closely at antlers before shooting. New antler restrictions are the best option we know of to protect a significant percentage of yearling bucks, and at the same time still allow everyone to hunt antlered deer. The impact of these antler restrictions should be enormous, noticeable after just one season. We expect that by 2003 hunters will see more and larger bucks than ever before.

Public Education

We cannot move deer management forward without making more people more knowledgeable about deer, their effects on habitat, and the vital role hunters play. For the last three winters, Dr. Gary Alt has given more than 150 lectures to more than 70,000 people. During these lectures Gary stressed the need for controlling deer popu-

lations, allowing bucks to get older, and breaking the tradition that harvesting a doe is a consolation. In addition, more than 30,000 videos explaining the need and direction of our deer management program have been distributed across the state. Additional articles like this one will be written for *Game News*, and be posted on the agency's website.

We have made a lot of changes, and more are in the works. We will be evaluating every change thoroughly before and after each is made. As with any change, there is risk involved. However, we need to keep in mind that the deer re-

source is very resilient and prolific. Each change we make will be monitored over the next several years to determine its effect. Management decisions will be based on information we collect to evaluate the change.

Change is constant in our lives, and we need to adjust to it. Society is changing, and hunters and hunting are not viewed the same as they were 20 years ago. Deer affect everyone in Pennsylvania, not just hunters, and our management of deer needs to reflect the needs and desires of all people. Deer hunting will be defensible from anti-hunters as long as we manage deer based on science and society's needs.

We are breaking deer hunting traditions with the changes we are making. At the same time, we are creating new traditions to hand down to future generations of hunters. No management change will work if we do not have the cooperation of hunters. However, we believe hunters will be satisfied with Pennsylvania's deer management program if they adapt to the changes. □



Hunting in the Big City

By James J. Corsetti Jr.

PHILADELPHIA; it's where Pennsylvania began — Pennsylvania's first city. It has a rich and varied history, from the early days of William Penn's proprietorship to, more recently, hosting the Republican National Convention. It's also known as a "City of Neighborhoods." Within the city and county of Philadelphia are places such as Fishtown, Nicetown, Bridesburg, Germantown, Manyunk, Roxborough, and other sections that used to be actual villages, and South Philadelphia — home of the cheese steak sub and various sporting venues.

Part of my law practice is in South Philly. Because my father was born and

raised there (I was born in farm country in Montgomery County), I enjoy hearing stories about where he came from. Because a lot of my practice focuses on wills and estates, I have a lot of elderly clients. On occasion, the topic of hunting comes up, and that's when I discovered that many of these old-timers, guys in their 80s and 90s, had hunted literally in their backyards, right in South Philly, for small game, and that they did well. It's hard to comprehend today that within a highly urbanized area that hunting actually occurred with regularity. However, back in the early part of the 20th century, South Philadelphia, as well as other parts of the city, was not near as congested as it is now, and there were

farms on its fringes within county limits. In South Philly, it was not so much the farms that provided the hunting, but rather trash dumps and swamps, south of what is now Oregon Avenue.

According to local lore, the original inhabitants of South Philadelphia were of German and, later, Irish descent. Near the end of the 19th century, a new wave of European immigrants arrived, mostly Jews, Eastern Europeans and, of course, the Italians. The Italians pretty much dictated the cultural scene of South Philadelphia. They were truly Americans — they completely left behind their homeland. They fought in our wars, including against their own people in World War II, and embraced the rights and privileges America offers, including hunting.

In Italy, hunting is not done much by the masses, and when it's permitted, it's almost like a shooting gallery. Literally, in Italy, up until only a few years ago, they would have a general hunting season and almost anything was fair game. Also, the average citizen there didn't have the opportunity to hunt. Here, they saw all sorts of game, and it was for the taking.

The area hunted by these new arrivals in the early part of the 20th century was bordered on the north by Oregon Avenue and stretched south towards the mouth of the Schuylkill, and then across that river into southwest Philadelphia, and going along the marshes and swamps bordering the Delaware River down to the area now known as the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge. Near the area where Packer Park and the sports stadiums are located was a network of swamps and trash dumps. That was where many began their hunts.

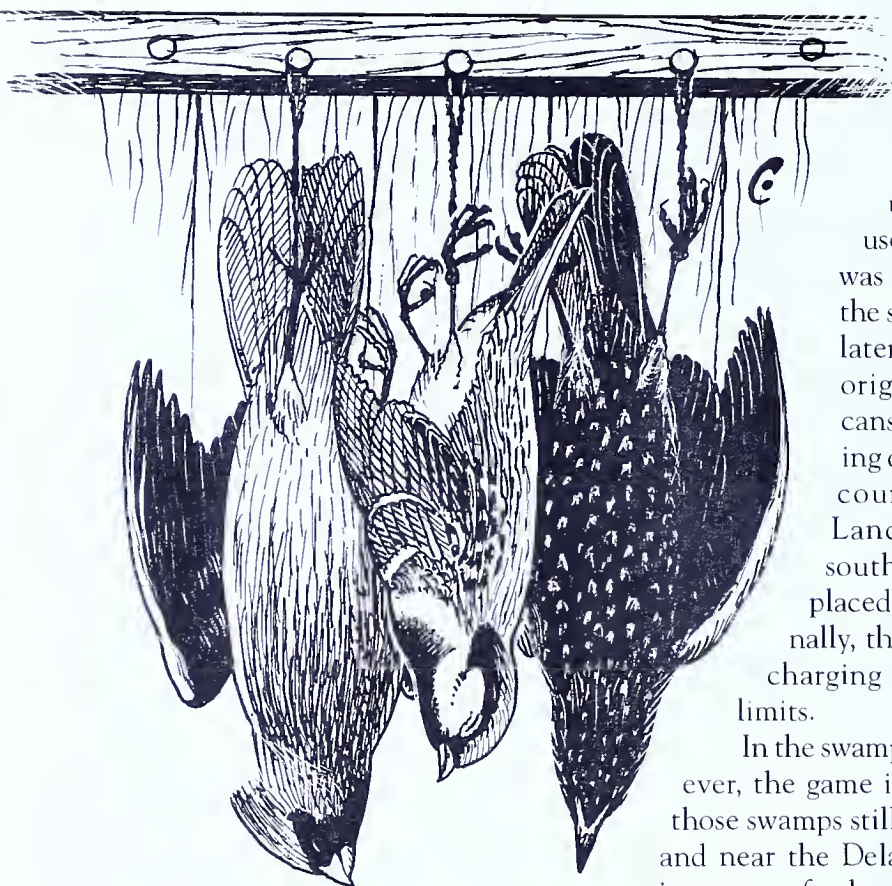
Most of the stories told to me occurred prior to World War II, although there was some hunting done in the region after the war, until the area became built up. A variety of game could be found there. Pheasants, rabbits, squirrels, muskrats, and abundant waterfowl and songbirds were found all over that area. Most of the hunters used

shotguns, but many used .22s because they were cheap to shoot.

Most of the new immigrants did not drive cars, and saw no need to buy them. Public transportation — trolleys and trains — was all they needed. When a bunch of guys wanted to go hunting, they would get their guns and dogs, hop on the nearest trolley and take it to its last stop. There they would hop out, load up and start hunting, the dump area first and, later, the swamps.

Try to hop on a bus nowadays with your shotgun, and not only will the passengers scream in terror, but you'll have half the Philadelphia Police Department there in a second. Back then, though, no one gave it a second thought. At the end of the day, now loaded down with game, the hunters took the trolley back home. According to my clients, the trolley most often used back then was the Broad Street Line, which was closed after the subway was put in.

The game bag then might have about anything in it. Remember, this was before World War II, and the game law was much different then. Of course, pheasants and rabbits were always treasured, as were ducks and geese, but many of the immigrants also hunted for something illegal — songbirds. Relishing their new freedom, they would shoot songbirds, because in the old country they were considered a delicacy. In fact, apparently in Italy there was a type of songbird that sat in trees all day and got fat eating figs. The Italians would shoot the birds right out of the trees. Here, our different species of songbirds didn't matter. A particular favorite were starlings, a bird they were familiar with from back home. There's not much meat on a songbird, but they used what they could. Back then, everything was fair game, and they took advantage of that.



Also, many immigrants shot rats for sport. They were abundant in the dumps around where Veteran Stadium now sits. Many of my “younger” clients and friends, fellows now in their 50s and 60s, talk about running down to the dumps as kids with .22s to shoot at the rats.

Many, as kids, learned how to use a rifle by shooting these pests, and later, as teenagers, would go down to the dump late at night and use their car headlights to illuminate the area and shoot rats attracted to the light, using the vehicle’s big hood as a rest: Puts a whole new spin on jacklighting.

After World War II, however, factories and warehouses sprouted every-

where in the area south of Oregon Avenue. Developments such as Packer Park sprang up where the dumps used to be. The airport was built there, as well as the sports complexes. The later generations of those original Italian Americans either stopped hunting or went out into other counties, particularly Lancaster. Farmland in southwest Philly was replaced with row homes. Finally, there was a ban on discharging firearms within city limits.

In the swamps that still exist, however, the game is still there. Some of those swamps still hold wild pheasants, and near the Delaware and Schuylkill rivers, waterfowl and shorebirds are plentiful. Of course, unlike back then, deer are everywhere there is cover.

Today, if you want to hunt in South Philly, you’ll have to do it on a computer, on one of those simulation games. Basically, the only hunting allowed in the city is with a bow for deer, and only if you have permission on private property.

The old days are gone, and the memories of them are slowly disappearing as well. It’s nice to know, however, that at one time the city of Philadelphia provided its new citizens with a kind of outdoor recreation they were restricted from in their former homelands. It’s a freedom they exercised happily. Philadelphia’s history has always been about freedom, and these immigrants and their experiences in the outdoors proved it. □

Bald Eagles in the 21st Century

By Dan Brauning
PGC Wildlife Biologist

RECENTLY, my encounters with bald eagles took a new turn. Merlin Benner, biologist with DCNR's Bureau of Forestry, told me about the nest, but I found it empty and disregarded it. Then, on my way to a meeting in Harrisburg, I pulled onto the shoulder of the road across from the nest and noticed it immediately: An adult bald eagle was sitting on it.

I've gone many times onto Haldeman Island in Dauphin County to observe the eagles nesting across from the reintroduction tower. I've even been in that nest to place a foster young, and had seen many other bald eagle nests across the state. But when I pulled onto the shoulder of that busy highway, glanced across the river and saw the alert, regal presence of the bird sitting on her nest, it certainly reflected something new for bald eagles.

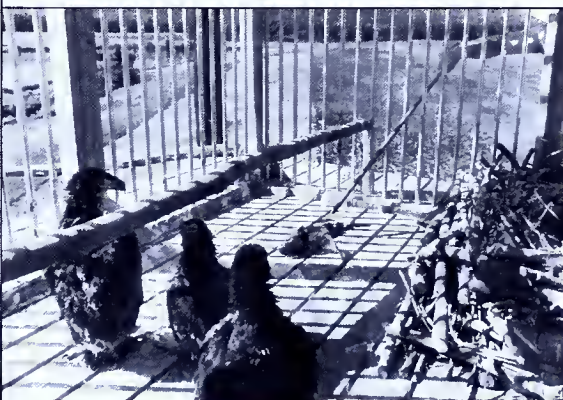
The story has been told many times: Declining numbers, pesticides, and direct persecution. As it was with most wildlife at the beginning of the 20th century, industrial growth and little protection resulted in tremendous impacts on habitat and numbers of wild animals. Forests were cleared, water polluted, and pesticides poisoned the environment. Eagle numbers, estimated to be about 100,000 in North America at the time of European settlement, reached a low in 1963 when only 417 pairs were known to occur in the lower 48 states. Just two or three pairs remained in Pennsylvania, and those typically failed to produce any young. Times were bleak for the bald eagle back in the 1960s and '70s.

When first learning to enjoy the outdoors as a young city kid, I wanted

PGC Photo



PGC Photo



HACKING TOWER on Haldeman Island where some of the first batch of eaglets from Saskatchewan were placed in 1983.

badly to see a bald eagle. Driving to, at the time, Brigantine Wildlife Refuge in New Jersey, I sat for long spells on the dike opposite the artificial nest tower built to attract eagles. The bald eagle is the national symbol, among the most majestic of God's creatures. I wanted to see one in the worst way, yet no eagle was there for me and, in reality, nesting on that tower was quite unlikely. My first sighting and the subsequent nesting near the wildlife refuge came years later.

Eagles are symbols of power and majesty. Aloof and removed from human civilization, they have also been icons of wilderness. Direct persecution during the 19th and early 20th centuries contributed to eagles being shy of human encounters. A large bird such as an eagle, relatively slow to get airborne and, frankly, a large target, can be quite vulnerable to those with hostile intentions. So it learned to be wary of man. Its need for clean water and large trees also pushed eagles away from civilization and out of much of their historic range. Other birds of prey were also affected, and with those dramatic declines came a new concern and aware-

ness of environmental issues.

The bald eagle's recovery story has also been told many times. In Pennsylvania, 92 young eagles were released in two locations and in a couple foster nests. Those releases during the 1980s were the beginnings of a population that has re-

sponded in growing numbers. Neighboring New Jersey, New York and Ohio also released eagles, and the combined effect produced a population of young that considered this area home. After their 5-year period of growing up, many of those birds returned and established nests within

our boundaries.

Young eagles released by the Game Commission settled in the state and were confirmed nesting in Tioga, Butler, Dauphin, Pike, and probably in other counties as well. From a depleted and unproductive population, bald eagles were given a new lease on life here and across their range by these reintroductions, legal protection, improved habitat and, to many Americans, a new respect for their existence.

Every year since 1986 the number of bald eagle nests in Pennsylvania has increased or at least remained steady. On average, 15 percent more nests were found each year since 1990. I wish my savings account grew like that. Eagles now are nesting in at least 22 of Pennsylvania's 67 counties, and as of this spring, in every Game Commission region. Last year seven new active nests were found, and so far this year we know of at least 11 new nests. The recovery and growth in

Every year since 1986 the number of bald eagle nests in Pennsylvania has increased or at least remained steady.

SEVEN-WEEK-OLD eaglet seems to be asking itself "What's goin' on here?" as it awaits placement on artificial nest in Pennsylvania after long trip from Saskatchewan.

PGC Photo





PGC Photo

A BAGGED Saskatchewan eaglet lowered to waiting hands of PGC employee was soon off to its new home during Pennsylvania's reintroduction program in the 1980s.

this bird's population has been nothing short of spectacular across the birds' range.

On July 6, 1999, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service made the dramatic (although anticipated) proposal that the bald eagle be removed from the endangered species list. The nesting population had grown to 5,748 nesting pairs in the lower 48 states, well above the goal spelled out in recovery plans. That delisting has not (by spring 2002) been carried out, in order to assure continued protection of the birds' nest sites. Many biologists now believe that the bald eagle may no longer require the special protection of the Endangered Species Act.

My sons will have many more chances of seeing a bald eagle in the wild than I could have hoped for during my first 25 years. Several years ago, one of the boys came running into the house claiming to have just seen an eagle. Unlikely, I

thought, but sure enough, it was a young eagle. My boys could easily join the crowds along the Delaware River at Lackawanna or on Pymatuning's shores and fully expect to see a bald eagle. While not really common anywhere except a few winter concentration points, eagles have reached a number where we can anticipate seeing them in many places in Pennsylvania and around the country. That represents a tremendous change, and a new opportunity for the many people who enjoy watching wildlife.

This new familiarity with eagles cannot be attributed to the larger numbers of birds alone. The birds themselves have changed. Last year a pair nested, literally, overlooking Interstate 84; a new nest is now in view of Route 15; a Chester County pair places its nest almost overhanging a busy road; a telephone pole set for ospreys is used next to a Game Commission maintenance building; and eagles nest on a Delaware River island outside Philadelphia. These situations are pointing to a bigger trend in the birds' behavior — a new tolerance of people. Maybe the eagles have no other option, because the best habitat is taken, but the continued success of most nests, even those new sites next to our dwellings, suggests that this new familiarity is not coming with strings attached.

So, what has changed? Eagles are still large birds, at the top of the food chain, and still susceptible to our imprudent behavior. They learn quickly whether or not to fear us, and how close they can come before being at risk, yet they move closer each year. As their numbers increase, eagles are adapting to the altered human landscape and coming into closer contact with us than ever before. Maybe, in reality, something is happening to all of us. □

Poke Salad Days

Penn's Woods Sketchbook / Bob Sopchick

LAST SPRING, A POKEWEED plant sprouted just outside our bedroom window, in my wife's small, formal garden. It quickly overshadowed the irises, heather and even the rapidly growing yarrow. A month later, it dominated the small space like a wild, unruly rock star standing among the conservative perennials.

Just as I was about to sever the stalk and yank out the roots, Terry said, "Wait, let it stay."

"Are you sure?" I asked. "This plant will be the size of a beach umbrella by the end of summer. The birds will eat the berries, depositing seeds through their droppings, which will stain the deck purple. Next spring I'll be digging pokeweed out of the hedges. This stuff spreads quickly. The seeds can sprout years later."

"I sort of like it," she said. "It's different."

Terry always saves a special place in her collections for the unusual object, the oddball find. The pokeweed, which she promptly named Bob, stayed.

Bob flourished in the unrelenting sun, completely unaffected by the drought. By late August, he was 8 feet tall, with an equally broad span.

The pokeweed shaded the window better than an awning, and many times I awakened at first light to catbirds and mockingbirds greedily gobbling up the indigo berries and chasing one another through the maze of pink stalks.

This icon of summer reminded me of summers past, those salad days of youth, and of long journeys on the endless network of dirt roads that led from the edge of town, through farmland and high into the uplands, deep into the heart of summer.

DURING A HEAT WAVE in the early '60s, two friends and I set out to find the spot with the coolest shade. It's my father's idea, a way for him to get a relaxing day off, free from kids whining about the heat.

Our search begins under the elms bordering the ball field, but heat wafts in from the baked yellow clay field and is trapped under the high canopy. We try the grassy lawn on the side of the school building that is always in shadow, but we decide that no



good shade would be found in town, so we pack our rucksacks and head for the hills.

We seek relief in the crabapple woods, but here the canopy is low and somewhat thin, so we follow a favorite creek west of town. The creek is wide and rocky and only ankle high. We splash far upstream, the white rubber trim on our black hightop sneakers washing clean in the gritty bottom.

A tributary tapers, narrows into small stepped pools where the water barely trickles over the rocks. Craneflies loop above dank eddies. It's a little cooler here where the oaks arc high overhead, cooler than any place in town, but we just aren't satisfied, and continue up the mountain. After clawing our way up through the thick tangles to a dirt road we're sent back into the brush by an approaching pickup truck billowing plumes of dust behind.

Time for lunch on a mossy log at roadside. We carry Army canteens on webbed belts, and drink most of our water trying to wash down clots of peanut butter sandwiches. While we eat, cicadas sing and a woodchuck scrambles across the road, diving into a patch of turk's cap lilies.

As we pour the remaining water from our canteens over our heads, the pickup returns down the hill, coating us with yellow dust. Each of us carries a walking stick, mine fashioned from a perfectly straight crab sapling. It has a leather thong looped through a hole in the top, is carved with my initials and decorated in green and yellow stripes. Streaks of water and sweat stripe our faces and arms, and we plod on like some wild and rare painted tribe of nomads.

Farm country lies just ahead, great expanses of brilliant fields where the corn sighs, and fields of goldenrod, Queen Anne's lace and thistle are alive with bees and butterflies. We walk gingerly past a farm when, on cue, a shaggy red dog roars down the lane. We run madly, then climb a willow tree, sitting there a few minutes until the panting beast heads back home to his water dish. No one speaks; we have been chased by this dog before.

We know the limits and temperament of every dog in our territory. Farm dogs never pose much of a problem because there is usually a tree nearby, but we fear the city dogs, as they are bored and over-zealous in their defense of small territories. Country dogs know how big the world is, and their noses possess extensive lexicons. City dogs are limited in all regards, and over-react to everything.





LIKE A MALLEABLE ALLOY, the sere landscape tempers to a high red color in July's forge, then is hammered blow by blow, day by day, on the broad anvil of summer until the decorous frills of spring are pounded out.

Holsteins rest under a copse of locust trees, unmoving, like painted plywood cutouts.

There is no birdsong. Heat rises in waves from the road. All is still except for the barn swallows that follow our progress.

We drag along, then brighten a bit, stopping to gorge on blackberries from a roadside patch. The juicy berries taste like tart, hot pie filling. My pals complain when I carefully pack my canteen half full, one berry at a time, but I know it'll be worth it later.

Past the last mountain farm, and the road continues on into the forest. We stop at the edge of the woods at an ancient trough, a V of mossy boards lined with tin. The water trough brims with cold, eternal spring water streaming at a quarter-measure from the rusty pipe. We drink deeply until our sides hurt, then submerge our heads in a contest to see who can hold his breath the longest. When we glance at each other under the water we start laughing and come up choking and gasping in a spray of bubbles. Soaked to the bone, we fill our canteens and continue on.

Catbirds follow and scream from the dark thicket. In the fine dust of the road are delicate beetle tracks like the faint stitch scars on delicate skin. More obvious are the tracks of raccoons, deer, songbirds, foxes, rabbits, and the serpentine twining of a snake. Deer flies and gnats descend on us like dive bombers. Dragonflies buzz by, sounding like the baseball cards we placed in the spokes of our bikes. At a turn near an old burn, a huge black snake slithers out of some ferns, and seems to take forever to cross the road.

Farther on, a doe stands up just off the road, liquid eyes fixed hard on us. She stands absolutely still, like a perfect copper statue, newly struck, monumental, shimmering. The shadows are illuminated by the light of her burning wildness, and I am startled when she lifts her tail and sails away, and startled again when two fawns rise and do the same.

The road climbs sharply, becomes rutted and rocky. Our worn sneakers squish and slip on the sandstone. Several fritillary butterflies cluster in a group on the road. We lie down slowly to watch them at their eye level. There must be water just under the ground here as the ground is gritty and damp in this heavy shade. It leeches the heat from our bodies.

"This is it," I say. "This is the place with the best shade."

WE CLIMB HIGHER, all the way to a fern covered powerline. This is as far as we have ever gone. From here the river valley gorge looms invitingly beyond, but we're already miles from home. I stand transfixed by the depth of the blue shadows of the opposing mountain. This is serious country, and I feel that I am standing at the near edge of the rest of my life.

On our way back down we are drenched by a sudden, brief thunderstorm that, like a country dog, has a bark worse than its bite. Towhees sing their rain song in the shadows. A family of young grouse whirr out, one after the other, each peeping nervously before takeoff.

The humidity rises, and the sun bores down again. Lightshot mists rise from the fields. Indigo buntings flash blue, a much different blue than the pale azure chicory flowers. Goldfinches flit like yellow sparks before us, launching from and alighting on the stalks of bull thistle and teasel.

With a long way yet to go, we take a more direct route, a long path in the woods that follows a steep ridge. We walk quietly, Indian file, several yards apart — something I enjoy doing even to this day.

It seems an ancient thing, walking like this. You can walk like this only in a forest or on the sharp spine of a ridge, or when breaking a heavy snow trail. It would be unnecessary on a beach, and impossible on a sidewalk heavy with pedestrian traffic, where people in the habit of chatting incessantly walk abreast.

There must be a safe distance between, so as not to jab your fellow traveler with lance or bow, and not bump into him if he stops suddenly

after spotting danger or game ahead. You must be able to read his body language or catch a slight hand signal. Also, walking in file, three can walk as silently as one. All these simple, wondrous, forgotten things, these hard-earned lessons basic to human survival, where are they now? They live on only with hunters.

It is late afternoon, and raindrops spatter from the canopy as an unseen squirrel runs along a treetop sidewalk. Chipmunks chirp at our progress, and down near the

creek the liquid song of a wood thrush trickles through the hollow. We come down out of the woods into a field where waves of fireflies rise and blink. Beyond is our neighborhood.

THAT EVENING I sit on the steps of the big painted porch while my parents creak to and fro on the swing. My sister and her friends catch fireflies in the yard while I eat vanilla ice cream sprinkled with blackberries. Down the valley, heat lightning flashes in the bellies of clouds.

A cool breeze descends the mountain and washes through the neighborhood. It is a breeze from some high, wild place, maybe all the way from the big woods beyond the powerline. On that breeze are images of all things wild, and I see those things one by one in detail as they flash by; ferns and feathers and fur and flowers and black earth and rank puddles and turtles and mossy logs and pines and pokeweed, and myriad others I have seen this day that I have no name for. It is all here now, on my porch, carried by this sweet summer breeze.

I stare up into the woods into the shadows within shadows, wondering what deer do on summer nights.



No Place Like Home

MONROE — Last winter PGC biologist Mark Ternent and I examined a bear with two cubs in a den that had been used to raise young for three years in a row.

— WCO PETER SUSSENBACH, BLAKESLEE

Cooperation

CUMBERLAND — A man who had been bitten by a raccoon informed me that the raccoon was dead but irretrievable. Knowing the potential for rabies exposure, I explained to the man that we had to obtain the coon to have it tested. He then pointed up a tree to a dead raccoon wedged between some branches. It was too windy to climb the tree, so I contacted the local fire department. Special thanks go out to Dave Wickard and Richard Yocum of the West Pennsboro Fire Department for their help in retrieving the raccoon. Fortunately, it tested negative.

— WCO EDWARD B. STEFFAN, NEWILLE

Misguided Intentions

HUNTINGDON — I was giving WCO Travis Pugh a tour of his new district when we noticed a trail of fresh corn spilled along the road through a game lands. The trail went up one valley and down another, for nearly 20 miles. Our initial thought was that the corn was falling out of a truck hauling the grain, but then coming from the opposite direction we spotted an individual dumping corn out the window of his vehicle. We eventually got the individual to pull over, and the man said he had some leftover grain so he decided to feed the animals. I explained to him that he was luring animals to the road where they would be hit by cars. Sure enough, not long after, we spotted two roadkilled squirrels.

— WCO ROBERT A. EINODSHOFER, HUNTINGDON

Piques My Curiosity, Too

I received a call from a man who wanted to know if I could give him the name and address of a hunter if he gave me the hunter's license number. I explained that by law I couldn't divulge the identity of hunters except under specific limited circumstances, and then asked him why he needed the information. He told me that his neighbor had a fox den under a shed, and had found a turkey leg with a hunter's tag attached to it. The tag was current, but the name and address of the hunter were illegible. He said he's just dying to know the story behind this occurrence.

— JOHN A. SHUTTER, JR., LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION CHIEF, HARRISBURG



"Bird Dog?"

BUTLER — Arriving home one day I discovered that a neighbor had placed a grouse in a pet carrier that I keep around for nuisance animals. It seems the grouse had been eating food from his dog's dish, and then following the dog around. When my neighbor let the dog inside his house, the grouse would bang against the door, trying to get in. I released the bird on SGL 95, but hope I don't get reports from hunters about a grouse chasing their dogs.

— DEPUTY JAKE DINGEL, BUTLER

Late Risers

CLARION — Wild turkeys generally leave the roost right at first light to begin feeding, but one day last February I noticed a flock still on the roost at 9 a.m. On another property, a landowner told me that her resident birds didn't start their day until around 10 o'clock. My neighboring WCO Rod Bimber believes that due to the abundant mast and mild winter, the turkeys didn't need to feed as much as they normally would. I have to agree. The acorn crop was heavy, and it appears that wildlife didn't make a dent in what nature provided.

— WCO ALAN C. SCOTT, NEW BETHLEHEM

Too Close for Comfort

BRADFORD — Toni Yoder told me she often sees turkeys feeding in her yard, but one night she left her garage door open and had a turkey roost in the rafters. Maybe she needed a "No Vacancy" sign.

— WCO MATTHEW GREBECK, E. SMITHFIELD

Family Support

BUCKS — I was having problems setting up my new computer in my home office in my new district until my 13-year-old son Dan walked in the room, watched for a minute, and then calmly sat down and corrected the problems.

— WCO JOHN M. PAPSON, TRUMBAURERSVILLE

Better Late than Never

COLUMBIA — Members of the North Kulp Hunting Club told me that they failed to bag any bucks during the regular deer season, but that several members scored on bucks during the late muzzleloader season.

— WCO JOHN MORACK, NUMIDIA

Adaptable

BEDFORD — A landowner here told me about a pair of gray foxes that routinely visited their backyard feeding station to gorge themselves on whole kernel shelled corn. It seems strange, but they have video to prove it.

— WCO TIMOTHY FLANIGAN, BEDFORD



Thunderous Duel

INDIANA — During a spring storm, as lightning lit up the sky and the thunder boomed, for more than an hour my family and I listened to turkeys gobbling back. Now, if I could only duplicate that thunder during the season.

— WCO JACK A. LUCAS, BLAIRSVILLE

Unique Trophy

MONTGOMERY — Last spring I shot a gobbler that had five beards, one on top of the other and from two to seven inches long.

— WCO J. CHRISTOPHER HEIL, COLLEGEVILLE

Nothin' Like the Real Thing

ALLEGHENY — I recorded songbird calls so the kids at the Beaver County Envirothon could learn to identify species by their songs, and I must have done a good job, too, because while playing the black-capped chickadee, a live one flew into a nearby tree and began singing.

— WCO GARY FUJAK, CORAOPOLIS

A Kodak Moment

ADAMS — On the first day of the spring gobbler season, a local hunter was unsuccessful at calling in a mature gobbler that he had been seeing with some jakes and hens. As he emerged from the woods, though, he noticed the turkeys scratching along the road right behind his vehicle. Unable to take a shot, he shot a photo with his camera instead.

— WCO LARRY D. HAYNES, GETTYSBURG



Real Dilemma

CAMBRIA — I responded to a call about a sick skunk in a woman's yard, and when I got there the frightened lady of the house pointed out the critter. I picked the skunk up by the tail and put it in a bag, but before I could leave, the woman tried to give me money for removing the skunk. I refused, of course, explaining that I was just doing my job. The woman said I had saved her life and then gave me a big hug. I then debated whether it was better to go home smelling like a skunk or another woman's perfume.

— WCO SHAWN HARSHAW, NANTY GLO

Adaptable

BERKS — I recently watched a bluebird perched over a roadkilled deer, feeding on the insects attracted to it.

— WCO DAVID BROCKMEIER, MOHNTON

Derailed

FOREST — I was walking back to my vehicle after completing a deer/turkey mortality survey when I got caught in a rainstorm. I was approaching some railroad tracks that I had to cross when I heard a train coming. The train reached the crossing before I did, however, and all I could do was wait until it passed. Eventually, I reached my vehicle where the landowner, Mr. Post, was waiting. He grinned and mentioned something about a drowned rat, and how the rain would help his crops.

— WCO DANIEL P. SCHMIDT, WEST HICKORY

Tall Order

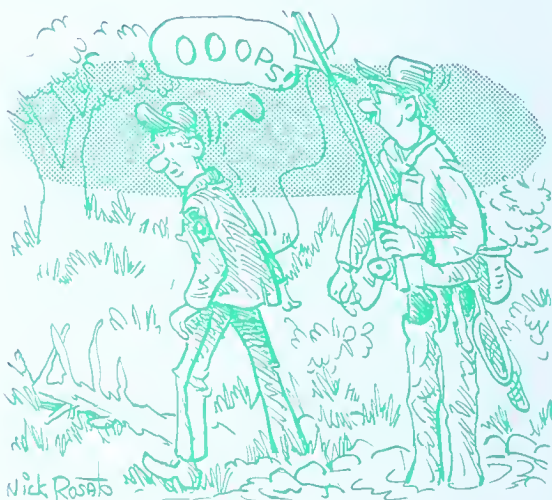
I heard a rabbit squealing in my backyard and noticed a crow holding onto a branch with one foot and clutching the small bunny with the other. The crow eventually took off carrying the rabbit. Crows are opportunistic predators, but usually don't take such large prey.

— LMO GEORGE J. MILLER, MARIENVILLE

Home Run

ALLEGHENY — I noticed a flock of turkeys feeding in a field adjacent to the ballpark during my son's baseball game in mid-April, and at one point a bird flew low right down the first base line, through the outfield and over the fence, which caused the outfielder to hit the dirt, and the hunters in the crowd to begin talking about the gobbler season opener.

— WCO BETH A. FIFE, BETHEL PARK



Snagged

BERKS — Deputy Dan Lynch was helping Waterways Conservation Officer Ray Bednarchik check fishermen on the first day of trout season, and while he was checking the license of a fly fisherman, the man began putting his fly rod together and rigging up his line. When Dan finished, he turned to walk away but soon noticed that the angler's fly was caught on his zipper. Dan mumbled something about the next time Ray gets to check the fly fisherman.

— WCO CHUCK LINCOLN, LEESPORT

Smarter Than the Average Bear

WYOMING — Bears love birdseed, but when they find a birdfeeder they generally smash it to bits to get to the seeds. Beverly Azar, however, told me about a well-mannered bear that visits her backyard. This particular bruin holds the birdfeeder between its paws and gingerly dumps out its contents. After eating the seeds, the bear ambles off only to return the next day for seconds.

— WCO WILLIAM WASSERMAN, TUNKHANNOCK

Appreciate It

ARMSTRONG — We want to thank the property owners here who opened their land up to the members of the Game Commission's "Deer Capture Team." In addition to allowing access, some individuals provided helicopter landing sites, housing, guide service, and even fed the crew on occasion. Your cooperation and assistance has made this radio-telemetry buck study one of the most successful deer research projects of its kind.

— FARM-GAME MANAGER LARRY D. DELANEY, TEMPLETON

Heroes

Food & Cover Corp workers Len Boyer, Chuck Campfield and Joe Loughney were placing buoys on the waterfowl propagation area on Shohola Lake in Pike County when they noticed two fishermen whose boat had capsized in the 50-degree water. Thanks to the crew's actions, the two men, who most likely would have succumbed to hypothermia, lived to tell about the ones that got away.

— LMO JOHN SHUTKUFSKI, DAMASCUS

Teamwork

NORTHUMBERLAND — I would like to thank the Anthracite Longspurs chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation for supplying apple tree seedlings, and the Line Mountain High School Conservation Club for planting them and clearing an area for a food plot on SGL 84.

— WCO RAYMOND O'DONNELL, MT. CARMEL

Last Minute

FRANKLIN — Clark Barr from Waynesboro told me that on April 29 he saw a buck still carrying its 4-point antlers.

— WCO KEVIN L. MOUNTZ, ST. THOMAS



They Look Good

CAMERON — Tyler Bush of Clear Creek told me that deer have been eating his flowers. Nothing unusual about that, except that the flowers are plastic.

— WCO CLINT J. DENIKER, EMPORIUM

Packing It On

MONROE — Deputy Greg Gorski and I recently trapped a nuisance bear that, according to tattoo numbers placed under its lip, had been trapped eight years earlier in Pike County and weighed 98 pounds. It now weighed nearly 500 pounds and should be one impressive bruin this fall.

— WCO MARK RUTKOWSKI, SWIFTWATER

Just Enjoy

BUTLER — A frantic woman told me she saw a flock of turkeys in her neighborhood, and wanted to know what she should do if she saw them again. I asked her if the turkeys were causing a problem, and she said they weren't, but that they are wild just like all the deer she sees. She then said the Game Commission must be doing a good job managing wildlife. I thanked her, but decided not to mention the bears.

— WCO MARIO L. PICCIRILLI, RENFREW

Good Neighbors

YORK — On Game Commission leased property near York New Salem, I drove by a rooster and hen pheasant on one side of the road and a male and female bobwhite quail on the other.

— WCO CHAD R. EYLER, YORK



Sure as Rain

MERCER — April showers brought more than May flowers — nuisance beaver calls. No matter how good the past beaver trapping season has been, there are always areas where there weren't enough taken. I can count on these calls as soon as the spring rain brings high water.

— WCO DONALD G. CHAYBIN, GREENVILLE

Only the Nose Knows

HUNTINGDON — Deputy Steve Peters is good at finding baited areas, and last deer season he thought he had discovered a site that was laced with "deer cocaine." After handling and smelling the substance, he was able to determine that it was not deer cocaine but kitty litter — used, I might add.

— WCO JOHN B. ROLLER, HUNTINGDON

Dedication

BEDFORD — On the first day of the spring turkey season I met an 80-year-old gentleman who, despite walking with a cane, was headed up the mountain, trying to take the 38th turkey in his hunting career.

— WCO JIM TROMBETTO, NEW ENTERPRISE

Catapult

NORTHAMPTON — One day a gray squirrel jumped from a tree limb onto the cab of my truck, grabbed the high band antenna and slowly bent it down, bringing us face-to-face before it launched off.

— WCO BRADLEY D. KREIDER, CHERRYVILLE

Doesn't Happen Every Day

DAUPHIN — I had just finished a school program in downtown Harrisburg and was loading my pelts, bones, feathers and a 10-point rack into my truck when I heard a man calling to me from across the busy street. The man dodged across four lanes of traffic to say that he wanted to hold the deer rack, because he had always lived in the city and never felt deer antlers. I was reminded that those of us who work or live in rural areas sometimes take wildlife for granted.

— WCO MIKE DOHERTY, DAUPHIN

It's the Law

BEAVER — Before the spring gobbler season a landowner told me he could only get toms to gobble when he closed his squeaky car door. Laughing, I reminded him that it's illegal to use motorized vehicles to hunt game.

— WCO TRAVIS ANDERSON, ALIQUIPPA

Gee, Thanks

TIOGA — WCO Rich Shire helped me process my first bear here in my new district. We caught the nuisance bear in a culvert trap, but because of its immense weight we couldn't get it out of the trap, so we started working on it inside. I was holding the bear's mouth open so Rich could pull a tooth when Deputy Dave Robertson took it upon himself to move the bear closer to us. Just as Rich was about to pull the tooth, the bruin appeared to come out of the tranquilizing drug and lurched forward with my fingers still in its mouth. After catching my breath and counting my fingers, Dave peeked around the back of the trap and casually asked, "How's that?"

— WCO RODNEY P. MEE, WELLSBORO

Farmers/landowners encouraged to enroll in CREP

PENNSYLVANIA farmers in the 20-county lower Chesapeake Bay drainage area are encouraged to consider enrolling a portion of their land in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP).

"Pennsylvania farmers and rural landowners who enroll in CREP are the state's greatest hope for restoring small game habitat in Pennsylvania," said PGC executive director Vern Ross. "The program will not only benefit small game, but also will go a long way toward improving water quality and reducing soil erosion into the Susquehanna and Potomac river basins."

CREP is administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and in Pennsylvania, the program aims to enroll 100,000 acres of highly erodible cropland and buffers within 180 feet of a stream in a 20-county region of southcentral and southeastern Pennsylvania for 10 to 15 years.

Eligible land must have a cropping history or be marginal pasture. Once enrolled, land must be planted with conservation cover, such as native warm-season grasses, cool-season

PGC biologist **SCOTT R. KLINGER**, right, here with Commission President **Sam Dunkle**, was awarded the Wildlife Management Institute's 2002 Touchstone Award, in recognition of his farsighted creativity and tireless efforts to frame, expand and implement Pennsylvania's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP).

grasses and legumes, or trees and shrubs. Participating landowners are offered annual rental payments (rental rates will vary by county and soil type, but range from about \$55 to \$200 per acre) with the possibility of a one-time bonus payment for implementing certain conservation practices, such as riparian forest buffers, grass filter strips or creating wetlands. Landowners also receive up to 100 percent cost-share for installing such practices.

CREP does not target Pennsylvania's best farmland. Rather it focuses on those lands most in need of conservation assistance.



"Although this program will affect less than three percent of the farmland in the 20 counties eligible for CREP, it can positively influence water quality, recovery of declining wildlife populations and farm income," said Scott Klinger, Game Commission farmland wildlife biologist. "This program is entirely voluntary and will work only if farmers and landowners participate."

USDA began taking offers for enrollment in CREP on June 1, 2000. Program enrollment will remain open until Sept. 30, 2002, or until the 100,000-acre cap is reached. So far, nearly 89,800 acres have been offered for enrollment in CREP in the 20-county region.

Klinger noted that wildlife habitat biologists and other Natural Resources Conservation Service staff have completed 1,979 conservation plans encompassing 45,212 acres. Nearly 18,000 of those acres are also part of the PGC's Cooperative Farm-Game Program. Almost 9,000 acres were planted this spring with native warm-season grasses, and more than 2,800 acres (more than 250 miles) are forested riparian buffers.

"Eight of the 20 counties already have surpassed the target goal set for acres to be offered," Klinger said. "Those counties are Columbia, Fulton, Montour, Northumberland, Schuylkill, Snyder, Somerset and Union. Landowner interest in these counties has been keen and we are struggling to keep up with demands."

"Bedford, Dauphin and Perry counties are within 1,000 acres of reaching our target goal. However, in the remaining counties, we need to hear from more farmers and landowners if we are going to have the Pennsylvania CREP reach its full potential."

Klinger stressed that CREP is a voluntary commitment to conservation,

and may not be for everyone.

"We are working to help eligible tenant farmers and landowners understand how they can benefit from this program," Klinger said. "As some have said, 'Farm the best, CREP the rest.'"

With nearly 90,000 acres already offered, farmers and landowners interested in participating in CREP are encouraged to contact the habitat biologist assigned to their respective county as soon as possible:

- Bedford, Fulton and Somerset counties, Brian Wolff, 814-445-6876 (ext. 130);

- Northumberland and Union counties, Colleen DeLong, 570-286-7114 (ext. 114);

- Adams and York counties, Dean Shank, 717-334-2317 (ext. 119);

- Cumberland and Franklin counties, Sharon Scarborough, 717-249-3924 (ext. 113);

- Dauphin, Lebanon and Perry counties, Roger Coup, 717-921-2380 (ext. 108);

- Columbia and Montour counties, Scott Singer, 570-784-1062 (ext. 126);

- Berks and Schuylkill counties, Kevin Wenner, 570-622-1312 (ext. 119);

- Juniata and Snyder counties, Chad Spencer, 570-837-0007 (ext. 113); and

- Chester and Lancaster counties, Josh Homyack, 717-396-9423.

Farmers also may contact the USDA Service Center in their county, which is listed in the telephone book blue pages.

Funded at \$210 million over the next 10 to 15 years, CREP is an unprecedented example of federal-state cooperation and how to build partnerships for conservation. State and non-profit contributions must equal 20 percent of the total program costs. Nearly \$150 million will be new fed-

eral funds, with the remaining \$60 million in state and non-profit contributions. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation and Ducks Unlimited have pledged \$5 million. The Game Commission will expend nearly \$8 million over the next 10 to 15 years.

Pennsylvania CREP was one of the first projects approved for Growing Greener funding. Growing Greener, administered by the state Department of Environmental Protection, will provide \$650 million for environmen-

tal projects over the next five years. Nearly \$20 million in Growing Greener monies will support CREP.

If the 100,000-acre cap is achieved before September, Ross said that he intends to seek approval to expand the program to the remaining 21 counties in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed and request an additional 50,000 acres. He also plans to seek approval to develop other CREP contracts for the Ohio River Basin and the Delaware River Basin.

Landowners encouraged to consider Link

FARMERS and other landowners looking for help in dealing with deer and other wildlife related problems are encouraged to enroll in the PGC's "Link Program." "Now is the time for landowners with an overabundance of game animals to begin advertising for help from hunters and trappers," said Vern Ross, PGC executive director. "This program will help landowners and farmers who need assistance managing species from deer and groundhogs, to crows and coyotes."

Link is designed for landowners troubled by wildlife, especially where deer are affecting agricultural crops and forest regeneration. The program empowers landowners to help direct hunting or trapping pressure to land that may not be open to public hunting and trapping. Participating landowners are not bound to open their property to public hunting and trapping — as in the PGC's cooperative public access programs — nor must they open their property to every hunter who is interested in coming there. Also, the program does not require a long-term commitment.

In the program, landowners are asked to fill out a "Landowner Infor-

mation and Property Profile" form, listing details of interest to hunters and trappers, such as: a description of the property, including number of acres; number of wooded acres; description of any bodies of water; sporting arm limitations (for instance, only bowhunting); maximum number of hunters permitted on property per day; game species in abundance; and hunting limitations (for instance, only antlerless hunting, hunting by daily registration only, or no treestands). The form is then posted on the Game Commission's website.

In turn, interested hunters and trappers may access these landowner Link listings through the "Hunter Information Section" of the Game Commission's homepage at www.pgc.state.pa.us. After identifying a property they would be interested in visiting, hunters and trappers then would complete a "Hunter/Trapper Information and Profile Form," which they would then send to a participating landowner. This form will provide landowners with background information about interested hunters and trappers, including: name; address; telephone number; age; years of hunt-

ing experience; and hunting preferences (species, dates and times). With this information, and possibly a subsequent telephone call, landowners would decide whether to invite any applying hunters or trappers to come to their property.

Landowner participation forms and hunter/trapper information and

profile forms can be obtained from the agency's homepage or by writing: Pennsylvania Game Commission, LINK Program, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797.

Forms also are available through Game Commission offices, the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau and PSU Extension Service offices.

Conservation projects funded

THE GAME COMMISSION and the Fish and Boat Commission have received \$2.5 million in federal monies for high priority fish and wildlife conservation. The funds come from the \$80 million State Wildlife Grant Program administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

"To stretch these dollars further, we again plan to offer matching grants to local project cooperators," PGC executive director Vern Ross said. "By doing so, we can spur local investment and maximize the federal funds. This year, we will be placing more of an emphasis on conservation planning and implementation."

Prospective conservation partners will be sent project nomination packages by mid-June. Grant applications will be due by August 31, and project selections will be made by November 1. Contracts will be finalized by the first quarter of 2003.

Last year, the two agencies announced that more than \$1.3 million in federal Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program (WCRP) funding was awarded for similar purposes.

Other federal proposals being reviewed by Congress, including the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA), could provide additional federal dollars for wildlife projects.

Last year, the two commissions received 52 proposals requesting \$7.8 million. Only \$1.5 million was available in Pennsylvania under the WCRP.

First-year projects approved include:

Appalachian Cottontail Distribution in Pennsylvania; Assessment of the Paddlefish Reintroduction Program; Building a Biodiversity Conservation Movement in Pennsylvania; Distribution and Abundance of Reintroduced River Otters in the Allegheny River Drainage; Important Bird Areas Conservation and Education Project; Important Reptile Population Monitoring in Southeast Pennsylvania; Northern Flying Squirrel Monitoring and Management; Pennsylvania Important Mammal Areas - A National Pilot; Peregrine Falcon Satellite Telemetry; and Susquehanna River Birding and Wildlife Trail.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

COPA supports PGC outreach efforts

DEMONSTRATING its commitment to Pennsylvania's hunting and trapping heritage, the Conservation Officers of Pennsylvania Association (COPA) presented the Game Commission with \$1,500 to support the agency's Wild Action Grant program and its Becoming an Outdoors-Woman program. COPA is a non-profit, privately run organization comprised of Game Commission Wildlife Conservation Officers, Fish and Boat Commission Waterways Conservation Officers, and their deputies.

The Game Commission's Wild Action Grant program provides funding to schools, non-profit youth groups and non-profit community groups with youth programming to conduct habitat improvement projects, develop an outdoor environmental education areas, or to develop and conduct public environmental education programs.

Offered by the Game Commission since 1996, BOW is an international program offering outdoor skills workshops to women 18 years and older, to encourage their participation in outdoors activities.

Created in 1994, COPA was organized by Pennsylvania's Wildlife and Waterways Conservation Officers to advocate sound scientific management of all wildlife and natural resources; promote a variety of educational programs dealing with outdoor recreation and environmental topics with emphasis toward involving Pennsylvania's young people; and sponsor scholarships for students pursuing careers in a variety of conservation fields. Affiliated with the North American Wildlife Enforcement Officers Association, COPA also provides members an opportunity to promote professionalism among their ranks.

Middle Creek programs/art show

JULY 24 & 25, In anticipation of the upcoming bicentennial of the famed Lewis and Clark Expedition, lecturer and historian Paul Sivitz will follow the adventures of Meriwether Lewis for one 24-hour period. "June 14, 1805" has been described as Lewis's strangest day, one filled with encounters with the then little known wildlife species of the American West. Sivitz, executive director of the Core of Discovery, an organization dedicated to bringing Lewis and Clark to the classroom, will provide insight into the expedition that literally changed

the face of America. Programs begin at 7:30 p.m., and are free.

August 2, 3 & 4, Middle Creek Wildlife Art Show. This, the 17th annual wildlife art show at Middle Creek,

will showcase the works of more than 30 of

Pennsylvania's finest wildlife artists. Enjoy some beautiful wildlife art and meet the artists who create it. Friday, August 2, 1 p.m. - 6 p.m.; Saturday, August 3, 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.; and Sunday, August 4, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

The Middle Creek visitors center is south of Kleinfeltersville, Lebanon County.



Charges filed in case of illegal possession of a mountain lion

DAUPHIN COUNTY WCO Mark Fair recently filed charges against Marlin John Bressi III, 24, of Harrisburg, for illegally possessing a western cougar. If found guilty, Bressi faces a \$300 fine. At the time the animal was confiscated, the 7-month old female weighed 40 pounds and had not been spayed or de-clawed.

Records indicate Bressi purchased the cougar on November 1 from a facility in Virginia. He failed, however, to obtain the required Game Commission permit, and did not comply with secure caging requirements stipulated by the agency.

Pennsylvania's last known wild eastern mountain lion was killed in Berks County in 1874. And, except for Florida, the eastern mountain lion is believed to have been extirpated from the East Coast by 1900. But, over

the years, mountain lion sightings have been reported throughout the state.

The overwhelming majority of cases investigated prove to be mistaken identity, based on tracks, photos or other physical evidence. And while some believe mountain lions exist in the wilds of Pennsylvania, there is no conclusive evidence to support such views. If someone does encounter a mountain lion, the most logical explanation would be that the cat escaped from or was released by someone who either legally or illegally brought the animal into Pennsylvania.

Anyone with information about exotic wildlife that may be illegally possessed or improperly caged is encouraged to contact the Game Commission region office. All information will be kept strictly confidential.

PGC Awardees

Over the last few months, quite a few PGC employees have been honored for their work and other accomplishments. Biologist Scott Klinger is pictured on page 41. Here are others who have been honored recently.



LMO COLLEEN SHANNON was presented with the Shikar-Safari International Wildlife Conservation Officer of the Year Award. Shannon plans, oversees and assists in the management of and habitat improvement projects on state game lands and private properties enrolled in the agency's public access programs in Clearfield and Cameron counties and a portion of Elk County. Presenting the award is Bureau of Law Enforcement Director Dave Overcash.

LMO DAVID MITCHELL, right, and WCO RICHARD LARNERD, below right, were honored by the Pennsylvania Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation. Mitchell, Land Management Officer (LMO) for Lehigh, Northampton, Bucks, Montgomery, Delaware and Philadelphia counties, was honored as "Pennsylvania Land Management Officer of the Year."



Larnerd, Northeast Region Law Enforcement Supervisor, was honored as "Pennsylvania Wildlife Officer of the Year." JERRY ZIMMERMAN, left, NWTF Eastern Pennsylvania Regional Director, and CARL MOWRY, PA NWTF Chapter president, presented the awards.



Venango County WCO LEONARD HRIBAR, left, was the PGC's nominee for the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's 2002 Guy Bradley Award. Managing a deputy force of nine, Hribar is very active in all aspects of law enforcement. During the past year, he successfully prosecuted several cases involving multiple offenses, multiple offenders and lengthy investigations. The Guy Bradley Award is named for Guy Bradley, the first wildlife law enforcement agent killed (1905) while performing his duties to protect the nation's wildlife.

Forest County WCO RICHARD CRAMER was named the Northeast Conservation Law Enforcement Chief's Association's Officer of the Year. Last year, Cramer prosecuted 145 cases, with a success rate of 98 percent — 4 percent above the statewide average — and issued 311 warnings.



In Memoriam

John A. Badger

1931 – 2001

Game Conservation Officer

Supervisor

Southwest Region

Retired; 27 years

George C. Palahunik

1921 – 2001

Waterfowl Management Assistant

Northwest Region

Retired; 32 years

George L. Norris, Sr.

1908 – 2001

Game Conservation Officer

Supervisor

Southwest Region

Retired; 38 years

Arnold H. Hayden

1933 – 2001

Game Biologist II

Bureau of Wildlife Management

Retired; 34 years

Robert L. Stewart

1937 – 2002

Labor Foreman

Northwest Region

Retired; 32 years

Paul H. Glenny

1921 – 2002

Regional Director

Southcentral Region

Retired; 31 years

Daniel H. Fackler

1913 – 2002

Administrative Officer IV

Bureau of Administrative Services

Retired; 34 years

Donald C. Parr, Sr.

1922 – 2002

Game Land Management

Supervisor

Southcentral Region

Retired; 28 years

Orvis G. Wagner

1916 – 2002

Game Farm Superintendent I

State Wild Turkey Farm

Retired; 28 years

Miller Rosendale

1923 – 2002

Labor Foreman

Northeast Region

Retired

CONTACTING THE REGION OFFICES

Northwest — 877-877-0299

Southwest — 877-877-7137

Northcentral — 877-877-7674

Southcentral — 877-877-9107

Northeast — 877-877-9357

Southeast — 877-877-9470

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.



Off the Wire

by Bob D'Angelo

Colorado

Going into the 2001 big game seasons there were an estimated 260,000 elk, 490,000 deer, 1,600 mountain goats and 7,500 bighorn sheep in the state. Expenditures by hunters added an estimated \$500 million to the state's economy.

North Dakota

During the 2000 rifle season 1,194 hunters harvested 1,029 pronghorns — 806 bucks and 223 does. Hunters spent an average of 2.1 days after antelope. In 1999, 756 hunters tagged 643 pronghorns.

Louisiana

The 2000 hunting season was the safest on record. With 300,000 licensed hunters, there were only seven firearm related incidents, and no fatalities. In 1983, a record 46 incidents, including 18 fatalities, took place. Since 1970, 450,000 students have been trained in the basic hunter education course, with 20,000 trained annually since mandated by law in 1984.

Birdwatching

With more than 71 million participants, bird watching is the fastest growing outdoor activity in North America.

Massachusetts

Hunters took 2,163 turkeys during the 2001 spring gobbler season. Adult males made up 61 percent of the harvest; jakes 38 percent; and bearded females, 1 percent.

Elk Hunting Success Rates

Hunters harvested 23,727 elk in Wyoming in 2000 — a 44 percent success rate. Success rates of neighboring states in 2000: Montana, 20 percent; Utah, 27 percent; Idaho (limited draw areas), 31 percent; and Colorado, 24 percent.

Missouri

Hunters killed 55,302 turkeys during the 2001 spring season, with jakes making up 26 percent of the harvest. Macon County was tops in the state with 1,188 birds taken. There were 10 hunting related shooting incidents, with no fatalities, during the 3-week season.

Ohio

Hunters took a record 26,217 turkeys during the 2001 spring season — up nearly 30 percent from the 20,276 taken in 2000. It was the 24th consecutive year for a record harvest in the state.

Duck Harvests

In 2000, the top 10 states in duck harvest were: Louisiana, 2.5 million; Arkansas, 1.5 million; Texas, 1.4 million; California, 1 million; Mississippi, 634,000; North Dakota, 557,000; Illinois, 519,000; Minnesota, 492,000; Washington, 456,000; and Missouri, 439,000. Hunters took 185,185 ducks in Pennsylvania in 2000.

Grounded means having a firm connection to something solid, being anchored, secure. Hunting grounds a person, naturally, and puts him or her in touch with experiences and values that are the rock base of life.

Grounded

“WHERE’S JOEY?” I asked.
“Home,” his dad said. “He’s grounded.”

Grounded! Now there’s a term out of the teenage, “doo-wop” and “poodle skirt” past. Did they still use “grounded” to mean you’d done something your parents told you not to (or didn’t do something they told you to), so you were “confined to quarters?” No parties with friends, no burgers with your buddies or going to the mall with the gals, just school, then home and study. Maybe no TV and no phone calls, and certainly no dates on the weekend. Grounded!

I forget what it was that Joey did or didn’t do. I think it had something to do with grades, which grounding often did even in the “old days,” or not getting home

at the time he was told to, after the second warning (“three strikes and you’re grounded”). Whatever, grounding is a parent’s “tough love,” the withdrawing of privileges hurting Mom and Dad as much as the youngster. Who wants to see their child unhappy or have to put up with them moping around the house for a week?

Grounding is a tool for teaching responsibility, a preparation for the adult world, when “three strikes, you’re out” can mean you’re fired or worse. Before being grounded, Joey had been planning to make the trip with his dad to my place to go hunting that weekend. Young Joey loves to hunt as much as his dad does, and I suspected that spending days in the woods with his father and the “guys,” treated as an equal, adult hunter, were a highlight of the teenager’s year.

I have been grounded at times, but not by my parents. I’ve had to ground myself, too often, as an adult. There were days when I didn’t get all my work finished, so I kept myself from going afield. The trick is not to ground yourself continually, to make time to

Although 16-year-old LAUREN HAAK didn’t get a deer during her first hunt, the experience will help to ground her in good values for life.

Bob Steiner



get out there. Play a little “hooky” from the tasks that will always need to be done — of which there is an endless supply waiting — and go hunting.

Sometimes when I do so, sneak away to the outdoors, I feel like a character in a '50s family TV show. You know the scene: the teenager, supposedly grounded, climbs out the bedroom window to go to the malt shop with friends. My punishment afterward, when my responsibilities catch me, might be that when I return I'll have to ground myself even longer to complete my jobs. At least I'll have had the remembrance of that hunt, just like the pleasant aftertaste of an unauthorized double-malted.

Grounded. I thought about Joey while I was hunting the next day and about the word. I realized that as a hunter, I prefer to be grounded, in the sense of being on the ground. I had walked under a treestand on the game lands, stopping to see whether it was illegally nailed in (in which case I'd have phoned the Game Commission when I got home). The stand boards were nailed together, but the stand itself was ingeniously tied into two trees and supported by poles, also tied against the trees, which made it legal.

The stand looked like it might hold a hunter's weight. It appeared to have been there since at least the previous hunting season, the boards were that weathered. I knew that I wouldn't have been happy climbing into it. But then, I'm not happy about going up into any treestand. It's not vertigo or innate mistrust of do-it-yourself treestand makers or commercial stand manufacturers. I just like to hunt on the ground.

I discovered a long time ago that much of my joy in hunting comes from going out and about on the landscape. I dislike parking myself in a stand all day, or even for more than a couple hours at a time. I don't envy, but rather pity, those who sit in a treestand all deer season. Their hunt has to be like never changing the channel.

Going afoot is like clicking through all 100 channels. There's something different on every station.

I don't stride off through the woods when I'm ground hunting. Rather, I “sneak and peek.” I move slowly, watchfully from place to place, stopping to sit or lean against a tree for a half hour now and then. I'm always reinterpreting the terrain in light of where I might see game. By doing this I have learned far more about the animals I'm hunting, how they use the land for feeding, for normal movement, for escape, for resting, for breeding behavior and more.

Plus, when I'm on the ground, it's easy to quickly check a shot or follow up and retrieve game. I don't have to undo a safety belt, unload and lower gun or bow, descend from the stand, pick everything up, and the rest of the rigmarole involved in shooting from a treestand. And I don't have to worry about falling. I've been successful enough with my ground-based hunting technique that, although I won't promise myself to always be grounded, I'll stay grounded as much as I can.

Then again, as a hunter I am naturally grounded. Grounded can also mean having a firm connection to something solid, being anchored, secure. Hunting grounds a person, naturally. Hunting has literally put me in touch with experiences and values that are the rock base of life. To hunt correctly is to be raw-bone honest with yourself, with others and with the game.

One of the reasons hunting is so hard to classify as mere sport is that it has no continually-watching referee. Although it has rules and people who enforce them, most of the time we hunters police our own behavior. We are our own personal judge and jury. We alone know our transgression, that we couldn't measure up and so we cheated.

The gnawing knowledge of not having acted honorably, not giving the game and ourselves the respect we both deserve, kills any short-lived satisfaction of poaching a

big one out of season or after hours.

Hunting grounds me because it makes me make choices, again and again, throughout the day afield. Shoot or don't shoot, stop at quitting time or hunt a few minutes later, wear the safety orange or stuff it in a pocket, those and more forks appear in my road. I can turn either toward what is right or go down a path that takes me further and further away from being the type of person I want to be. If I end up in a quagmire of deceit, it will have been my own doing; better to stay on hunting's solid ground.

I know that I carry the grounding that hunting provides into the rest of my life, in how I conduct myself with others and in the decisions I make for myself. In hunting I must deal with issues that are truly life and death. I hold great power in my hands and am humbled by it. After the

personality-making or breaking tests of hunting, the choices I make in my personal and business affairs are almost easy. I've had lots of practice.

Because Joey's dad has encouraged him to be a hunter, I know that Joey will learn to make good decisions in his life, will be grounded in the way that matters most. His father just needed to give him a little reminder that there are consequences for actions or inactions that lead to pleasure or disappointment, by grounding him, in the sense of remaining at home, that weekend.

"Joey doesn't know it yet, but he's coming with me to hunt here next weekend," said his dad. "He'll have been grounded long enough by then to get the message."

Where there's love, some groundings aren't meant to last forever. And, where there's love, other groundings are. □

Fun Games — By Connie Mertz

Wren Wise

Place the letter of the correct species of wren in front of its clue, and then place the letters below to complete the statement.

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|------------|
| _____ largest of Pennsylvania's wrens | N | house wren |
| _____ mostly seen around cattail habitats | | |
| _____ smallest of Pennsylvania's wrens | T | Carolina |
| _____ often breeds in small colonies | | |
| _____ western species | R | winter |
| _____ rufous red above and buff colored below | D | Bewick |
| _____ once known as "short-billed marsh wren" | E | sedge |
| _____ most common wren in Pennsylvania | H | marsh |
| _____ likes moist areas with vegetation, but with little or no standing water | A | rock |
| _____ hasn't been known to nest in southern Pennsylvania since 1976 | | |

The sedge wren is a _____ species in PA.

answers on p. 63

All she wanted for her birthday was to see the coyotes that inhabited her land. Marcia got her wish and then some.

Coyote Birthday

TWO SUMMERS ago I reached one of those milestone birthdays that I didn't want to even think about. "Don't bother celebrating my birthday," I told my family.

"But, Mom," our son Dave protested, "I'm going to give you coyotes for your birthday."

I was skeptical that he could do so, even though our adventure with coyotes had begun the previous week, on the Fourth of July. As the fireworks reached their climax at a nearby amusement park, Dave reported hearing coyotes howling on Sapsucker Ridge.

Three days later Dave again heard coy-



otes howling, this time in the early morning.

In the meantime, I was getting more and more frustrated. Although I had had several glimpses of lone coyotes over the past four years, I had never heard them howl. Dave, who tends to wander the mountain at night and early in the morning, when coyotes are most likely to be about, had heard coyotes howl a few times.

Then, while sitting on the veranda the following afternoon, my husband Bruce and I heard a fire siren down in the valley, which was abruptly drowned out by coyote howls coming, again, from Sapsucker Ridge. We wondered if the coyotes were protesting the noise or trying to compete, but we later learned that a siren, a clap of thunder, or even the barking of a dog might encourage howling. Later, however, stimulated by no other human-made sound, the coyotes howled even closer as we sat on the front porch.

Both times Bruce and I were thrilled to hear those wondrously wild cries that sent chills of delight down our spines. Hearing the “song dogs” on our mountain, just as we had many years before while camping in the West, was a wish come true.

The day before my birthday, I was out shortly after 8 a.m., picking blueberries on Laurel Ridge, when the coyotes howled again on Sapsucker Ridge — wild, undulating music that ebbed and flowed and then died as suddenly as it had started.

That afternoon Dave climbed up Sapsucker Ridge and poked around in the thick vegetation below the ridgetop. There he practically stumbled on two coyote pups. One stood only 15 feet away from him. Neither showed any fear and studied him calmly before casually moving off into the underbrush.

Dave was certain they had a den in the area but, according to Gerry Parker’s *Eastern Coyote; The Story Of Its Success*, by July pups are no longer in their natal dens. Instead, they are at rendezvous sites where they are left by their parents to rest, play

and take short, exploratory excursions on their own while the adults are either resting nearby or hunting.

Whenever an adult returns, Parker says, they announce their arrival with a brief howl, which sends the pups into a frenzy of howls, yips, yaps and barks. No doubt that was what we had been hearing, although, according to other researchers, coyote pups also practice their howling at this time.

Dave was confident that he could show me coyotes on my birthday, but I was not so sure. I knew that coyotes constantly move their pups, especially after humans have discovered them. Surely the adults would have scented Dave, realized that a human had found their rendezvous site, and moved on.

Nevertheless, early the next morning I followed Dave silently up Big Tree Trail and down Sapsucker Ridge Trail. Just as he was ready to head downslope into the thick vegetation where he had seen the pups, I gasped. There ahead of us on the trail were three pups trotting purposefully along. I whispered to Dave who had been looking in another direction. Through my binoculars I had beautiful views of them before they ranged out of sight.

“Happy birthday,” Dave whispered. He had promised me coyote pups and he had delivered.

I sat down on a rock to take notes while Dave returned home. Then, 10 minutes later, a fourth pup emerged from the underbrush and followed the same path its siblings had taken. All of them were beige and lanky, and reminded me of teenagers in search of adventure.

I sat listening to a singing black-billed cuckoo, red-eyed vireo and scarlet tanager against the steady drone of traffic from I-99 below the ridge before continuing along the trail. Although I was constantly on the lookout for the pups, all I saw was an overpopulation of chipmunks running throughout the forest.

I even went down off the ridge into the

forest where they had emerged from, but I found no sign of them. Finally, I checked out the string of small vernal ponds that often provide water for animals as large as black bears, but most were almost dried up and there were no coyote tracks, only deer tracks, in their muddy margins.

The Far Field held the usual singing birds — indigo buntings, field sparrows, eastern towhees, American goldfinches — but no coyotes. Still, I was content with what I had seen and ambled back along the Far Field Road.

Suddenly, I spotted another coyote ahead of me on the road. Judging from its size, it was probably the mother. Although she was not much bigger than them, she had adult coloration — a black and reddish-brown coat and a black-tipped tail. She looked and sniffed and investigated along the road in search of food for her pups, before she veered off into the underbrush below the road and disappeared. What a treat. Not only had I seen four coyote pups, but also I had watched their mother hunting for food. Surely I couldn't ask for more.

Near the top of First Field, I stood, as I always do, and looked up and down the mowed path through the field. There, just below the spruce grove, sat a beige pup on its haunches, scratching its plump, white belly with its front paws. Then it slowly stood up and wandered off over the hill.

That was the last we heard or saw of the family. Even though none of the coyotes I saw seemed to notice me, they probably did and moved on that night. Coyotes, after all, are wanderers, usually spending their days sleeping on the ground in a dense thicket or woods and their nights hunting for food.

Here in the East they live mostly in mated pairs. Courtship often stretches from

late December until mid-February, and the male and female may howl in a duet before mating. During the 58- to 63-day gestation period, the female, assisted by the male, digs several dens in steep banks, mounds, gullies, brushy slopes or thickets, or renovates and enlarges fox or woodchuck dens. The den sites are usually south facing, easy to defend, and near water. They are difficult for humans to find and are frequently passed on from generation to generation.

In the main den, the five to seven pups are born blind and helpless, sometime in mid-April to mid-May. Their eyes open at two weeks of age and they venture out of the den a week later.

Then the female, who has been nursing the pups and fed by the male, joins her mate in hunting food, which is later regurgitated, partly digested, for their offspring.

When the pups are weaned, at eight to nine weeks of age, the family abandons den life for the year. Gradually, the pups learn to hunt from their parents, and most leave the family unit in late autumn, dispersing an average of 30 miles in search of their own territory.

The coyote's scientific name is *Canis latrans*, which means "barking dog." Although their howling is distinctive and includes at least 11 different vocalizations, the eastern coyote adults I have seen look like German shepherds. DNA studies of the eastern coyote found that it is a new animal, but these studies could not find a genetic marker that distinguished coyotes from wolves or dogs. As one researcher put it, "There is more difference between different breeds of dogs than between dogs and wolves."

Most researchers agree that our coyotes



moved East from Minnesota across Wisconsin, northern Michigan and southern Ontario. There they probably mated with Algonquin timber wolves, tentatively explaining why eastern coyotes are larger than their western counterparts. Eastern coyote pups are also more sociable than western coyote pups — more playful, less aggressive and less dominant in their behavior — all wolf-like traits.

Other researchers hypothesize that their larger size could be attributed to habitat. As Penn State's Richard Yahner writes in his new book *Fascinating Mammals: Conservation And Ecology In The Mid-Eastern States*, "Mid-eastern and northeastern states typically have diverse and abundant food resources, such as high deer populations, a variety of smaller forest and farmland prey, and food associated with humans (e.g. farm animals, garbage) compared to the drier, less productive areas of midwestern or western states." These "enhanced nutritional opportunities . . . " result "in an eventual gradual increase in body size of eastern coyotes over successive generations."

Coyotes are omnivorous opportunists. A 2-year study in Pennsylvania from April

until August 1991 and 1992 found that more than half the prey of 310 coyotes consisted of live or carrion white-tailed deer, followed by mice and voles, cottontail rabbits and woodchucks. They also ate some insects and birds. Plant materials, especially wild fruits, were as abundant as deer in their diet.

Other studies have shown that when coyotes are present, smaller predators such as opossums, raccoons, foxes and even bobcats decrease. (In Pennsylvania, bobcats and gray foxes seem to be unaffected by the presence of coyotes, but red foxes, opossums and raccoons are displaced by coyotes.)

Biologists in Michigan found that the success of ground-nesting song sparrows increased when coyotes moved in and hypothesized that the coyotes were killing the raccoons that preyed on ground-nesting birds.

Whatever the studies may show, I have found no reduction in either prey or predator species on our mountain. Neither have I heard or seen another coyote since that birthday two years ago. Maybe they are waiting until I reach another milestone birthday. □

Books in Brief

(Not available from the Game Commission.)

Rattlers & Snappers: Teachings, Tales and Tidbits, by R.V. Dunbar. Order from the author at P.O. Box 52 Frenchville, PA 16836, or on-line from Barnes & Noble, Borders or Amazon.com, 122 pp., \$15, shipping & handling included. *Rattlers & Snappers* is a compilation of the writings and talents of several people. The book is presented in a narrative format and covers the biology, habits and habitats of some of the snakes and turtles native to North America. The tales and tidbits celebrate the interactions of man and beast in the mountains of northcentral Pennsylvania.

For several years Vance Dunbar has been presenting reptile programs to groups across the state. His program aims to dispel the myths surrounding snakes and turtles in general, and timber rattlesnakes and snapping turtles in particular. A portion of all royalties from the sale of the book will be used to support environmental education and outdoor recreation programs for youngsters.

How successful you are in the whitetail woods could depend on how well you “read” between the lines.

Reading Whitetail Body Language

IT WAS that long-awaited classic shot. The dandy little 6-point was heading uphill, quartering away at a mere 15 yards. It would be nearly impossible to miss, but circumstances, and a failure to read the whitetail’s body language, would show I was up to the task — of missing that is. As I drew my bow, the top wheel of my compound emitted just the slightest squeak and the buck stopped still. Perfect, I thought at the time, a shot at a standing deer is so much better than one at a moving deer.

What I should have taken into consideration (and didn’t) was the buck’s body language. In this case I should have noticed his head and ears. His head was raised upright at full attention, his ears cocked, cupped and twitching to find the source of

the squeaking sound. Beyond that, more subtle but still apparent, I might have also noted how the buck’s entire body musculature was tensed for immediate action, and how his neck hair had stiffened and the hair on his rump and around his tail had begun to flair. The best time for a shot on a standing deer, of course, is when the animal is relaxed and unalerted. The worst time, as I should have understood by studying just a few “words” of the buck’s posture and behavior, is when a deer is at full alert.

I would pay for my illiteracy. I rested my 20-yard pin on the usual preferred spot just behind the buck’s shoulder at the center of the body and released the arrow. Even at only 10 or 15 yards, an alerted whitetail’s reflexes are extraordinarily quick. Like

magic, the buck dropped toward the ground as it gathered itself for that first leap toward safety.

WHEN A DEER finally wanders into your field of vision, its body language can tell you what to expect next. It’s a safe bet more deer will follow when one emerges from cover and then checks its back trail.





THE SLIGHT tucking of its tail and frozen stance suggests this deer is mildly cautious or suspicious.

The arrow passed well over the buck's back and struck harmlessly into the ground. The buck bounded away with his flailed white tail flagging high over his rump as he raced across the cut cornfield and vanished into the next woodlot. Now this was language I understood all too well. It said, "Later, buddy. You were careless. You screwed up again."

For bowhunters and firearm hunters alike, the ability to read a deer's posture and actions can spell the difference between success and failure. Deer in the wild seldom, if ever, let their guard down. Even when browsing through the forest, they are constantly checking and double-checking their immediate surroundings for signs of danger. When a deer finally wanders into your field of vision, its body language can tell you what to expect next.

Tail Language

In some respects, a deer's tail can speak as clearly as a human tongue. If you've spent any time in the whitetail woods, you'll remember that, more often than not, the one thing that first made you aware of a deer's presence was that flash of white that occurred when it flicked its tail. Tail flicking is among the most rudimentary of whitetail body language. A flick of a

whitetail's tail from side to side indicates that the animal is about to move — perhaps just a step or two, perhaps out of sight — and the tail flick is a signal to other animals in the vicinity that the move is about to take place. For a bowhunter, such a tail flick may be a signal that your quarry is about to move into (or out of) a clear shooting lane, and you should prepare to react accordingly.

Another sign that a deer may be about to move in a much more dramatic fashion is a subtle flair of the tail and surrounding hair on the deer's rump. This often indicates that the deer is suspicious of some possible threat and may bolt at any moment — or the animal may determine that the threat is non-existent or has passed, and the flaring of tail and rump will then subside.

If you're hunting the rut, the behavior of an estrus doe can often indicate the presence of a trailing buck. If the doe holds her tail straight and stiff, it is often a sign that she is ready to be bred, and the odds are that a buck is not far behind. Look for him to follow post haste.

Last but not least, there are those white flags of the tails of whitetails fleeing danger that every bowhunter is all too familiar with. This usually occurs moments after the deer detects (either visually or through scent) the presence of the unfortunate bowhunter, and may often be preceded by the tail and rump flair, so don't say you weren't warned. Flagging tails of fleeing whitetails serve as the ultimate warning to other deer in the area, and also indicate the preferred direction of escape. One thing you may have already noted about tail flagging is that many bucks, particularly mature ones, prefer to maintain a low profile and discretely tuck their tails when fleeing danger. If you notice that

while some deer are hightailing it away others are tucking their tails, you no doubt have (or had) some bucks in the area.

Head Games

The other end of the whitetail's body is another primary source of the animal's body language. You can learn a lot by observing the way a deer is holding its head, neck and ears.

When the deer's head is down and it's browsing or grazing, this is about as relaxed and unalerted as a whitetail can get. This body language tells you that this is the most opportune time to take a shot. Almost any noise or disturbance in the forest will bring a deer's head to an upright position and its ears pointed toward the noise. If that direction is toward you, you can bet it was something you did, possibly a slight movement that drew the animal's attention.

Like you, I have too often inadvertently drawn attention to myself in the whitetail woods, only to find a deer (more often than not the ever-wary lead doe) staring me down. At this point, it's what the animal's eyes are "saying" that takes on the utmost importance. What generally happens when you catch the eye of a deer is that it will first try to identify you. It does this by raising and lowering its head in a rapid head-bobbing action. The head bobbing is usually followed by hoof stomping, as the deer attempts to startle you into betraying your position. Foot stomping also places scent on the ground as a warning to other deer. Once the deer has detected you to the point where it has entered the head-bobbing, hoof-stomping phase, the odds are it will be hightailing it out of sight within a few seconds.

The secret in preventing this is simple: never make eye contact. When a deer becomes suspicious, I look away, tuck my head behind my

bow and freeze. I check on the deer with sideway glances using my peripheral vision until it decides that I'm just a part of the forest and finally strolls away, but this can be a tricky procedure, too. I've noticed that some deer will start to turn away, apparently satisfied that you pose no threat, and then suddenly cock and bob their heads again, still trying to get a fix on you. Then, when they finally do walk away, they tend to give your stand a wide berth anyway.

The action of a buck's nose and lips also reveals some things to an observant hunter. When a buck raises his head and curls his upper lips it usually means one of two things that have opposite implications for the bowhunter. It may be that the buck has winded something he doesn't like a whole lot, and odds are it's you (not good). On the other hand, if this lip-curling behavior occurs during the rut, the buck is most likely hot on the trail of an estrus doe. You can expect his defenses to be down as he throws caution to the wind, making him more vulnerable to your efforts (a good thing).

When deer first come into view or emerge into a field from cover, body language can indicate if other deer are following. If a deer in view stops at intervals to turn and gaze at its back trail, it's a safe



ONCE a deer makes eye contact with you, your chances diminish in a hurry.

assumption that more deer will follow. I've observed that in late afternoon, when the last deer in a string has entered a field and exhibited this back-glancing behavior, this provides overwhelming evidence that at least one more deer is still back in the cover. A savvy bowhunter will keep an eye out, waiting for that still hidden deer to reveal itself. If that deer is a mature or dominant buck, it may not emerge from cover for a long time. Sometimes, a really wise old buck will not show itself for an hour or more — often after legal shooting hours and sometimes not at all — but the fact that it was there at some point is indicated by the back-glancing activity of the deer that preceded it.

The fixed gaze of a buck can often be interpreted several different ways. If the gaze is simply a back glance, expect another deer — either a buck or doe. If the buck is holding his head erect, with the hair on his neck flaring out (particularly during the rut and pre-rut), this can be interpreted as aggressive behavior, and probably means that another buck is in the vicinity. If the buck you are watching shows submissive signs, including nervous behavior, his hair standing up and his ears tucked tightly back against his head, his body language strongly suggests a more dominant, more mature buck is somewhere around. In a case like this, you might want to forego shooting the submissive buck until you spot the other buck and see how he measures up.

A couple of years after the miss I mentioned at the beginning of this article, I found myself in a similar situation. It was during the late season, and I had a doe tag to fill. There was snow on the ground, which made it easy to spot three doe heading towards me. As the largest passed my stand at 20 yards, I drew my bow. It was one of those quiet winter afternoons, and I was perched, fairly exposed, in a bare yellow poplar. It was either the movement or



For bowhunters and firearm hunters alike, the ability to read a deer's posture and actions can spell the difference between success and failure. ANGELO SPADACCINO, Levittown, must have interpreted the body language of this Bradford County 12-point with a 22-inch spread he got in 2000.

the slight noise, but the doe's head snapped toward me, and her eyes fixed right on me.

At full draw and anticipating that the alerted deer would jump the string, I dropped the 20-yard pin to the bottom of the big doe's brisket and released the arrow. My calculation was not perfect, but it was accurate enough — the arrow struck the deer's spine at the base of the neck and the doe dropped on the spot. I had learned from my earlier mistake, read the deer's body language, adjusted my shot and collected venison for the winter.

The next time you bowhunt for white-tails, don't forget to "listen" with your eyes. A deer's body language speaks volumes. If you listen closely enough, your next shot just might put a final exclamation point on that trophy buck's last sentence. □

When purchasing a shotgun, determine what type of hunting it will be used for most, and then follow some of the guidelines offered here to make your choice.

The Smoothbore

“EVEN IF I had a million dollars, I wouldn't buy a new shotgun,” an old small game hunter told me while field-dressing a rabbit. “This old Remington and I have been together for nearly 40 years, and it's as good today as it was when my dad gave it to me in 1909.”

I didn't doubt that his pump was old. The stock was scratched from years of use, and the barrel and receiver had only small patches of bluing remaining. After stuffing the rabbit in his hunting coat, he lit a pipe and motioned for me to sit down. As small clouds of smoke curled up in the frosty air, the old fellow told me of the days

when he stuffed the pump with six rounds (legal when this fellow was young) of high brass number 4 shot and bagged a limit of rabbits on nearly every hunt.

The gun was a Model 10 Remington, which came out in 1907, and was a 6-shot outfit. The Model 10 isn't the subject of this article, however, it was his statement about not wanting another shotgun that brings up the question, “What shotgun is best?”

Before getting to the heart of the matter, one has to know exactly what a shotgun is. We know it's far different than a rifle, but what else should we know about the smoothbore to get the best results in the field? A shotgun barrel is not just a round tube of steel. A shotgun barrel is every bit as complex as a rifle barrel, but the nomenclature of a shotgun barrel is too complex for inclusion in this article.

There are many myths about shotguns and shotgun shells. Probably the two most prominent ones being that long barrels shoot farther and harder than short barrels, and that high brass shells have higher velocities than low brass ones.

Fact is, a shotgun barrel more than 25 inches (maybe even a bit shorter) does not contribute anything to how far the shot

Helen Lewis



DON LEWIS with a cottontail he took in a dense stand of pines. His Ithaca SKB 20-gauge double with 25-inch barrels proved ideal for hunting in thick cover.

charge travels or any increase in velocity. Long barrels are more suited to waterfowl hunting and some forms of claybird shooting, though, because they provide a longer sighting plane. One wingshooter claimed that a 32-inch barrel simply puts the hunter six inches closer to his target than a 26-inch barrel, and for sighting, his way of thinking is probably right.

The age-old myth that high brass shells

Bob D'Angelo



A COMMON myth is that long barrels shoot farther and harder than short barrels. Today's short-barreled turkey guns — like this Mossberg pump — can be real effective "gobbler getters."

offer more speed and power than low brass ones is not true. Shotshell manufacturers often refer to low base and high base, and these terms apply only to the inner base wad and are indicative of the inner volume of the case. They have nothing to do with power and velocity, or the height of the outside brass. To take this a step further, high or low outside brass is no indication of volume, strength or loading potential. Often, a trap or field load that has low outside brass will actually have a higher inner base wad to take up space and better accommodate its lighter powder charge. As far as speed is concerned, a 2¾-inch 12-gauge trap load of 1⅛ ounces of shot can be pushed out the muzzle at more than 1,300 fps. A high brass 1¼-ounce load of shot in a 2¾-inch case can have muzzle velocities only slightly higher. The main difference between the two cases is not velocity but the amount of the shot. A case with a low base wad can hold more shot and, therefore, produce a denser pattern.

The more pellets in the "killing" area of the pattern means more success in the field. Generally, a high brass shell has a low base wad and will hold more shot.

I have no idea how many types of shotguns have been on the market, but the four common types today are the single-shot, side-by-side or over/under double, pump and semi-automatic. I'm not forgetting the bolt action, but except in slug guns, it's not all that popular today. Also, the lever action shotgun was phased out a few decades back, although Winchester has recently come out with a .410 lever action shotgun.

The type of shotgun used often determines how successful the hunter will be. I'm a two-barrel buff. Semis, single-shots and pumps just don't seem to fit my philosophy for small game hunting, although I have shot a good bit of game with those other types. My

brother Dan was all for the double barrel, whereas my oldest brother, Cull, didn't want anything but a pump. Because he seldom fired the third shot, he couldn't come up with a valid reason for his preference for the slide action shotgun. He also used a slide action deer rifle, which suggests that he felt comfortable with what the rest of the family called the "yank back and slam forward" outfit.

I'm not suggesting that a shooter should stick to just one type of shotgun. While an over/under may have strong appeal, an autoloader might be the best action for you. Before you peel off a sizable chunk of money for a new shotgun, though, be certain you know why you want that particular type. This may take several seasons of buying used shotguns, but in the end, you'll have a better understanding of what's best for you.

Selecting the right gauge is always a problem. The idea of power makes many hunters immediately think that nothing

but a 12-gauge will do, and no one can condemn this popular gauge. The 12-gauge can handle nearly all shooting situations in the field, but there's more to it than that. It's worth pointing out that the almost forgotten 16-gauge can nearly duplicate what the larger 12-gauge is capable of doing. This may singe a lot of feathers, but the 16-gauge was, in my opinion, at one time, the best all-around choice for hunting, although it lost out to the 3-inch 20-gauge.

The 20-gauge is a versatile shotgun. I've used a 20-gauge in one configuration or another for more than 60 years. My first shotgun was a 20-gauge Stevens double, but over the years I've hunted with 20-gauge single-shots, pumps, two-barrel outfits and autoloaders. Basically, I've stuck with a 20-gauge over/under with 26-inch barrels choked improved cylinder and modified. I have never felt the 20-gauge was inadequate.

Just a note about the .410. In the hands of a good field shot it does a nice job, but its small shot charge and thin pattern does not make it a suitable choice for small game, and that's especially true in the hands of new or inexperienced hunters.

In selecting a shotgun, don't put all the emphasis on the action type. Be equally concerned with barrel length and choke. Keep in mind that too much choke is worse than too little. From my own experience, I know that more small game hunters would do better in the field with less choke. Rabbit and grouse hunters will raise their scores considerably by using an improved cylinder choke.

Many small game hunters have told me that they stick with full choke because it reaches out. I'm not sure just what that means in small game hunting, because most shots taken are well under 30 yards. If most of your shots will be in the 25-yard range, why is there a need for "reaching" out? At 25 yards, a full choke delivers a pattern diameter of about two feet. The IC choke will open up to around 40 or more inches. On close shots, the larger pattern

diameter will make up for small pointing errors, and I can cite a perfect example where too much choke worked against me.

I was testing a new 12-gauge semi-auto in a dense thicket that held a lot of grouse. First, the stock was a bit too long, but I thought I could overcome that. Second, the barrel was supposed to be a modified choke, but range tests proved it was closer to a full. I was using number 8 trap loads for the first shot followed by high velocity number 6s. I hadn't moved more than 30 yards into the woods when a grouse exploded out of a downed treetop and darted through the heavy foliage. I fired twice and missed, and 10 minutes later I missed another bird. I began to wonder if I should be in the gun testing business when I missed a third bird. Disgusted, I was heading back to my truck when I missed a fourth bird.

The next day I was back with my Ithaca SKB Model 280 double barrel 20-gauge "quail" gun. It had 25-inch barrels bored IC and IC. It fit somewhat better, and I quickly made two out of three shots. There was nothing wrong with the 12-gauge autoloader, but it didn't fit me, and it carried too much choke for the type of shooting I was doing.

When purchasing a shotgun, determine what type of hunting it will be used for most. Don't go with too much choke, and stick with the smaller shot sizes for denser patterns. Hunters who spend a lot of time in thick cover should consider compact doubles with 26-inch barrels. Have a stock maker or gunsmith shorten the stock, or add to its length, for a proper fit when wearing a hunting coat. Follow these tips and you'll notice more game in the bag. □

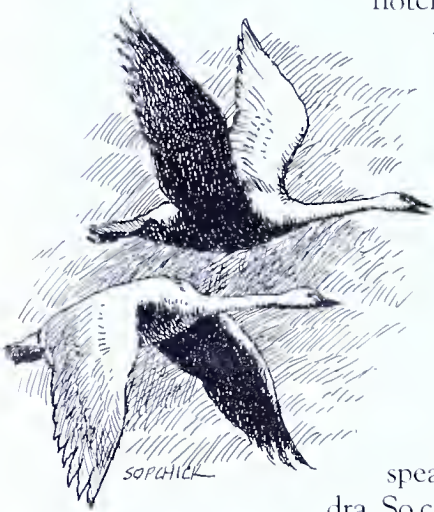
Fun Game answers:

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THREATENED.

SWAN SONGS

I'M ON MY deer stand in a deep hollow that feeds into the great river valley beyond. Here, tucked away in this fortress of boulders, I'm sheltered from the sleet and wind howling down the valley. At mid-morning I hear the high-pitched *woo-ho, woo-woo, woo-ho* of tundra swans, and then spot a flock of nine birds that veers into the hollow. Their ranks break and they descend until they are directly above me, suspended like an immense mobile turning in the wind as if for my enjoyment alone.

At first it seems the swans are only resting a bit in this protected notch, realigning their order, but when dense fog billows into the hollow, I wonder if they had made a wrong turn, having become disoriented upon losing the landmark of the fogbound river.



They speak to each other continuously in tones soft and harsh, their cries echoing, and I sense impatience and even argument in their wild voices. As they shuffle positions, their great wings fan the ragged mists and I am moved by their pale beauty. They hover like angels convened above holy ground — and this hollow is, in my heart, such a province.

The vortex of birds becomes silent for a few moments, and then an urgent clamber rises, a wild beckoning that speaks of shimmering bays and dark rivers and seamless tundra. So compelling are their cries that could I sprout wings I would fly from these rocks and join them. They leave this upland sanctuary, quickly reassembling into a V formation, and are swallowed up by the scudding clouds.

A moment later five deer usher up out of the mists, little more than wild vapors themselves in their gray winter coats. They file toward the ridge, then stand perfectly still, tails clamped down tight, barely distinguishable from the rocky statuary of deer-shaped boulders. Only one offers a clear shot, and when my rifle roars it collapses where it stands.

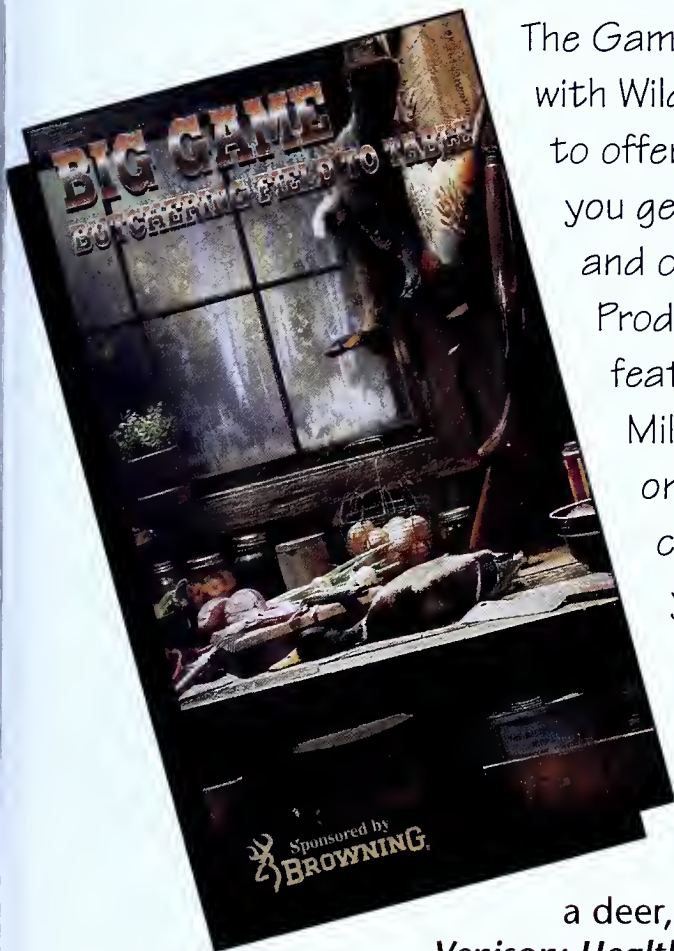
Both swans and deer have been following the topography of these hills for ages. I wonder if the deer paused down below, listening as I had to the swans. Did they also seek meaning in those alien voices, if only for portent of danger? Had they waited for these other-worldly beings to depart before they continued on with the press of the day?

While dressing out the mature doe, I admire its dark face and the sheen of its salt and pepper coat. I notice that its hooves are worn and scratched like my boots. We are travelers of these same rocky slopes, these deer and I, and I'm privileged to be part of their journey.

I've hunted this hollow for decades, and recall images of other hunts, still bright and fresh in memory. I know, however, that the progression of all my days in this timeless valley is of little more note than a pale feather falling through fog, my presence as enduring as a few hairs left on a rutted deer trail. I drag the deer through laurel and over rocks. Fingers of mist mend our anonymous passage.

-Bob Sopchick

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Elk Hunt 2002

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Your application can be drawn, too, but to "win" you have to play. Take a shot this year; you never know.



DANIEL BURK with his 6x6 trophy bull elk taken last year.

ELK LICENSE APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

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1. Use the Game Commission's e-commerce site. Go to www.pgc.state.pa.us and click on "The Outdoor Shop." Complete the form and submit your credit card information. E-commerce applications will be accepted through Sept. 13, 2002.
2. Use the form in the Pennsylvania Digest of Hunting & Trapping Regulations. Provide all the required information, enclose a check or money order for the nonrefundable \$10 fee and mail to the PGC by Aug. 23, 2002.
3. Use the application form found on the PGC website www.pgc.state.pa.us. Print the form, provide all required information, enclose a check or money order for the nonrefundable \$10 fee and mail to the PGC by Aug. 23, 2002.

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PENNSYLVANIA GAME NEWS (ISSN 0031-451X) is published monthly for \$12 per year, \$34.50 for three years, or membership in Pennsylvania's Cooperative Farm-Game Project or Safety Zone Project; to Canada and all other foreign countries, \$13 U.S. currency, per year. Published by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Phone (717) 787-4250. Periodicals postage paid at Harrisburg, Pa. CHANGE OF ADDRESS: POSTMASTER: Send both old and new addresses to Pennsylvania Game News, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Allow six weeks for processing. Material accepted is subject to our requirements for editing and revising. Author payment covers all rights and title to accepted material, including manuscripts, photographs, drawings and illustrations. No information contained in this magazine may be used for advertising or commercial purposes. Opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Copyright © 2002 by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, an Equal Opportunity Employer, the programs of which are all administered consistent with the goals and objectives of Affirmative Action. All rights reserved.

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A \$10 Shot

ELK HUNTIN' THIS FALL? In Pennsylvania? Your chances have never been better — but only if you apply.

Last year, the first Pennsylvania elk season in 70 years, saw 27 of the 30 hunters get elk, and every one, you can be sure, had a most memorable experience. This year promises to be just as good, and with more than twice as many licenses, the odds of being drawn are likely to be much better.

Nearly 50,700 folks applied for the 30 available licenses last year. For 2002, 70 have been allocated, and up to five may be awarded to nonresidents.

Also new this year is that the \$10 fee from the first 10,000 applications received will go toward a special cooperative project to improve elk habitat. Last fall the Game Commission and the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources agreed to provide \$600,000 over the next three years to fund habitat improvements for elk. Sportsmen's groups, conservation organizations, businesses and individuals are also being called upon to match the state's funding commitment.

The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation not only immediately pledged \$50,000 a year, but also agreed to spearhead efforts to raise an additional \$150,000 a year from other contributors. So far, Dominion Resources, Pittsburgh, has pledged \$15,000; Sinnemahoning Sportsman Club, Cameron County, \$5,000; and Safari Club International, Lehigh Valley Chapter, \$5,000.

The habitat improvements are intended to direct and hold elk to specific corridors and public areas within the elk range; reduce impacts to private property and elk-related conflicts; and enhance elk watching and related outdoor tourism opportunities. For habitat, the Game Commission and DCNR have identified about 80 sites that could be developed as wildlife food plots. The goal is to more than double the 1,100 acres currently managed as herbaceous openings.

Applying for an elk license could not be easier. You can apply online through "The Outdoor Shop" on the PGC website, www.pgc.state.pa.us, or print and mail the form from the PGC website, or fill out and mail the form in the 2002-03 Hunting and Trapping Digest. See pages 80-81 in the Digest, or page 48 in this month's "News" for complete application details and deadlines: You don't want to miss out.

Twenty-five or so years ago it appeared elk would soon be gone from the state, and any notion of having a hunting season would have been dismissed as a pipe dream. But beginning around 1980, the PGC and DCNR began to actively study and manage for the elk, and the rest, as they say, is history. Today we have around 700 elk, and they can be found over a wide area of northcentral Pennsylvania.

Don't miss out. For less than the cost of a tank of gas, you get a chance at what has to be one of the most exciting hunting opportunities available anywhere. And even though most of us won't be drawn, through our application fees we will, nonetheless, be an active, integral part of one of our nation's greatest wildlife management success stories. — *Bob Mitchell*

letters

Editor:

You know the idiot disclaimers you find on packaging? Like the one on a frozen pizza that says, "Remove pizza from carton and cellophane before heating. Do not eat pizza frozen." Though these disclaimers make amusing reading, I always wonder what idiot they think would put box and all in the oven. Well, I recently used a helpful hint from *Game News*, but I wish you would have put in one more detail.

I have a 125-pound black Belgian Shepherd. One evening I brought him inside for the night and then went to bed. The next morning I got up, left him back out and was having breakfast when my brother came downstairs and immediately exclaimed, "Who left in the skunk?"

Skunk? What skunk? (I have never been able to smell anything, even skunks.) We searched the house and came up empty. I went off to work, and when I came home, I gave Max a dog cookie. He took it, lay down between my brother and mother to eat it, and I went in to work on my computer. Then, before I even knew what was happening, my brother and mother burst through the door shouting, "It's him. It's Max. He stinks."

The next thing I knew, I was pushed out the door with a bottle of shampoo and a dog. Max hates baths. I hate to give them. We had an unlovely time. To top it off, when we finished and came in, both of them told me he smelled even worse.

Poor Max spent the next day in isolation in the backyard, banned from the house. I don't know why, because they were now complaining that the whole house reeked of skunk anyway. I remembered that somewhere I had read a recipe that was supposed to immediately remove skunk odor from dogs. I even remembered it was in *Game News*. I just had to find which one. Well, it was the April 2002 issue. Here's the recipe again, in case you forgot: one quart 3 percent hydrogen peroxide, 1/4-cup of baking soda and one teaspoon liquid soap. I was so happy to find this recipe and felt much better as I mixed it up. Little did I know, things were about to get even worse.

I rubbed it into Max's coat. He couldn't believe I would give him a bath again. Thinking it should set for a while, I went into the house. Later, as I was passing the door, I heard Max whining, and looked out to see that his coat was as stiff as wire bristles and very blond at the tips. Yipes!!!

I got buckets of water and chased him around the yard, throwing it in his direction. Did I mention he HATES baths?? Three in two days was more than his psyche could handle. Don't even ask where MY psyche was by now!!

The result of all this is that I no longer own a shiny coal black dog. He is a rather unusual reddish-gray color, and looks like he's had a bad perm. To make matters worse, he still smells like skunk!!

WCO Hower, you should have put an idiot disclaimer in your tip, saying, "Rinse immediately. May cause some bleaching."

K. LIPPY
HANOVER

PS: While it wasn't funny at the time, I've gotten a lot of chuckles from this since. But you can be sure, I don't laugh in front of Max.

Your comments are welcome. Mail them to "Letters," 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Letters will be edited for brevity and clarity.



scott
alpino

Wood Duck Hunting:

Defying Traditional Waterfowl Methods

By Bob Ballantyne

I HAD, I thought, one afternoon during the 2001 waterfowl season, selected a good site for a quickly constructed duck blind. But I was wrong. Facing west among the streamside vegetation along Pocono Creek, the setting sun was blinding. The ducks might not have been able to see me, but I sure couldn't see them either. With only about an hour left until quitting time, I knew I had to do something, so I abandoned the site, headed downstream through the forest to a shallow riffle, waded that bubbling portion of the trout stream, and headed back upstream to a point across from my original location. I settled in against a tree trunk surrounded by some low laurel and waited for the wood ducks that had given me some shooting on opening day.

It was a warm afternoon, and the stream passed through Pocono hardwoods that were in their autumn glory. Scattered sugar maples radiated crimson, and other trees wore cloaks of "raincoat" yellow and tangerine. My surroundings caused me to relax until an eye-catching motion on the side of the stream where I had originally set up interrupted my daydreaming. Standing in full view, nibbling on some berry bushes, was a huge black bear, and for a few moments the bruin slowly trod on the opposite shore before disappearing.

Not long after, the whistling song of duck wings sounded directly overhead. The woodies passed above the treetops from behind and settled 150 yards upstream. A moment later a second flock flew in, land-

ing closer than the first group, but still well out of range. Both groups would outfox me that afternoon.

Wood ducks, to me, are the grouse of waterfowl. Smaller than mallards, woodies are speedy fliers. When jumped on a stream they may quickly fly into the forest, darting among the trees with as much skill as any partridge. They do not rise steeply upward from the water like the mallard does, and are much more difficult to hit.

Wood ducks that have lived for months on a mountain stream become extremely wary. The first sign of movement and they're off, leaving any creek-sneaking hunter far out of range. Hunting wood ducks on mountain streams requires skills somewhat different from hunting ducks from a blind on standing water. True, during early morning and late evening, using a blind of some type is a desired technique, but during the rest of the day, "sneaking the creek" becomes necessary.

The type of water that stream-using woodies seem to prefer can be deceptive. One may spot mallards on a small mountain stream, but they are usually on a deep section, such as a pool created by a beaver dam. Wood ducks, however, like shallower water, and those found on a beaver pond or other slow moving stream sections will likely be at the head of the flat water. This results, perhaps, from their feed-



ing habits. They prefer to forage for shallow rooted emergent plants and tender submergents.

The hunter who wishes to hunt wood ducks from a blind should establish it at the head of the pool. In such an environment, one must remain vigilant. Woodies will not normally set their wings and drift down from the height mallards do, falling like large leaves in a gentle breeze. Instead, wood ducks appear rapidly and fly right into the landing area. Not until they are just a few feet above the water will they flare and land. Mallards land like hang gliders; woodies zip in like jets to a carrier deck, and if they see a hunter, or have the slightest suspicion of danger, they'll pass right on by, and so quickly that there's little chance for a well-placed shot.

The other technique for hunting wood ducks is the "creek sneak," a term that can be applied to both the method and the hunter. It's more difficult than it might seem. Perhaps it can be compared to trout fishing, only in this case the shotgun is the basic

tool. One piece of equipment, however, serves both sports — felt-bottom waders or hip boots.

There is no substitute for scouting the stream ahead of time, and not just for the presence of ducks. It's necessary to become familiar with every characteristic of the stream, especially bends and the length of straight sections. Woe is the hunter who is exposed to more than 30 yards of a straight section of creek. Any wood duck on such a section will have departed long before the shotgun can be shouldered.

Sneaking the creek requires using two terrain features to hide from the ducks: bends in the stream, and the surrounding forest and topography. For instance, when wading upstream towards a bend in the creek, stick to the bank on the same side from which the bend comes. If the stream turns to the right while facing upstream, sneak up the right side until reaching the bend, and then step out and around the bend to quickly look upstream — and be prepared for flushing ducks at any time. This is where prior knowledge of the stream is important. Advancing around that creek bend will be to no avail if that stream section seldom holds ducks, or if its characteristics cause the ducks to hold upstream from the bend. If the ducks see you, even a hundred or more yards away, they're off.

In such a case, the surrounding forest becomes the wood duck hunter's friend. Preseason scouting will let you know what parts of the stream the ducks are using. Memorize a feature of some type near that part of the creek — a tall hemlock or old snag, for example, or perhaps a boulder or deadfall. With that knowledge you can then leave the stream at the bend and head far enough into the woods to avoid detection. Walk parallel to the stream until you come abreast of the landmark, and then head toward the stream in a slow, perpendicular sneak, and be prepared to shoot quick when ducks flush.

Each stream will have its own characteristics, and the "puddle jumping" wood

duck hunter will have to adapt techniques to each water. For example, on one stream I hunt there is a S-turn in the creek where the upper end of the bend leads into flat water that is perfect for woodies. During the first several years I hunted this creek, I always spooked ducks when I moved around the first bend. However, the bank of the creek rises sharply where the ducks usually congregated, so I learned to leave the creek, cut into the forest, and sneak up to the edge at the high bank. In this manner, the ducks can't see me until I appear above them, and most of the time I get at least one good shot as they launch upstream.

This brings us to a characteristic of wood ducks that can be their undoing. In one sense, they are a little like woodcock. Woodcock hunters know that if you miss,

just watch the bird because it will often land within a short distance and can be flushed again. Wood ducks living on streams that flow through miles of forest seldom leave the stream, but would rather fly up or downstream and land again. Here, however, the hunter can be fooled, because wood ducks have a habit of landing and then moving some distance from the touchdown point.

Wood ducks can be a real challenge to hunt and they are not pursued in this forest environment as much as other ducks in more traditional habitat, so you can often have the stream to yourself. Wood duck hunting takes work, but woodies are perhaps the tastiest of Pennsylvania's waterfowl. What more can a hunter ask for? A duck that's a challenge to hunt, pretty to look at, and also great tablefare. ☐

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2001 Bear Season

By Mark Ternent

PGC Wildlife Biologist

THIRTY YEARS AGO the Game Commission implemented mandatory bear check stations. From these we learn much more than just the number of bears taken. Following is some of what we learned from the 2001 season.

Hunter Characteristics

Last year 109,250 bear licenses were sold, 2 percent to nonresidents. Over the last three years sales have increased 7 percent (Table 1), but they still number less than in 1997, when bear licenses were first made available at all issuing agents (previously, they were available only at the six Game Commission region offices and at the Harrisburg headquarters) and they are far below the estimated 250,000 bear hunters we had during the 1970s, before a license was created.

Almost 3 percent of last year's hunters got a bear, and nonresidents were as successful as residents.

Hunter success is gradually increasing (Table 1). From 1986 through 1990, about one in 61 hunters got a bear. The rate has improved to about one in 50, and in 2000 it reached one in 34. Better success is most likely due to a larger abundance of bears.

Successful hunters came from 19 states. While most were from Pennsylvania and adjacent states, a few came from as far away as Alaska, Texas, Nevada, New Mexico and Florida. Since 1980, hunters from 40 states have shot bears here.

More than half (61 percent) of suc-

cessful Pennsylvania residents shot their bears in a county other than where they lived, although this trend varied by county, depending on harvest size. For example, in counties with less than 75 bears harvested, an average of 59 percent were taken by county residents, whereas counties with larger harvests averaged 31 percent. The county with the largest harvest last year, Clinton, drew hunters from more states (7) and Pennsylvania counties (40) than any other. Although counties with large harvests tend to have lots of forested habitat, public lands and fewer people, they also seem to be preferred hunting places.

Successful hunters were predominately male, but 34 women got bears last year. The average age of successful hunters was 40. Half were between the ages of 30 and 50, although males ranged from 12 to 80 and females, 18 to 64.

Junior license holders killed 104 bears (3.4 percent), and senior license holders killed 115 (3.8 percent). Most bears were killed by hunters using rifles, but 20 were taken with a handgun, 9 with a shotgun, 8 with a muzzleloader, and 2 with archery equipment.

Harvest Size and Location

Hunters killed 3,063 bears, essentially matching the record of 3,075 set in 2000 (Table 1). Clearly, harvests are increasing, doubling in 15 years, but they also have become more widely distributed. In 1986, the first year a statewide 3-day season was held, bears were killed in 37 counties. In 1997 and again in 2001, bears were being taken in 50 counties (Table 1).

Large harvests are common in

northcentral and northeastern counties, where large contiguous tracts of forest and public land exist. The top ten counties in 2001 were Clinton, Lycoming, Pike, Centre, Tioga, Clearfield, Cameron, Potter, Elk and McKean — all in the northcentral or northeast (Table 2). More than half of the bears killed during the past 20 years have come from these 10 counties, but an expanding bear population and greater awareness of hunting opportunities are causing more to be taken outside the traditional counties.

For example, up until seven years ago, harvests in the Southwest Region averaged around 100; last year, 275 were killed there. In the Southeast and Southcentral regions, harvests were three and four times greater last year than they were 5 to 10 years ago. Fulton County, where no bears were taken until 1996, now averages 7 to 10 a year. The trend in larger harvests in counties once considered unlikely hunting places is expected to continue.

A large number of bears, however, does not guarantee large harvests. Weather and food conditions also are important. Heavy fog or rain tends to reduce hunter activity, while snow can improve hunter success. Abundant food, particularly acorns, results in bears staying active late into the fall. When food is scarce, bears den early.

Last year's large harvest occurred because all of the factors were in place: license sales were slightly up; bears were abundant over much of the state; weather was good, although mild; and there was a bumper crop of acorns. Dry weather in late summer may also have given hunters better than normal access to swampy areas where bears tend to hide.

Food availability can also have a re-

TABLE 1. ANNUAL BEAR HARVESTS AND SUCCESS RATES.

Year	Licenses Sold	Hunter Success (%)	Harvest	No. of Counties	Harvest Rate (%)
1986	94,700	1.4	1,362	37	18.1
1987	92,051	1.7	1,560	39	22.8
1988	91,604	1.8	1,614	39	21.9
1989	92,468	2.4	2,220	40	27.7
1990	93,348	1.3	1,200	40	17.4
1991	89,452	1.9	1,687	40	22.7
1992	91,165	1.7	1,589	42	18.9
1993	89,623	2.0	1,790	44	19.9
1994	89,408	1.5	1,365	44	15.8
1995	90,091	2.4	2,190	49	23.5
1996	93,893	1.9	1,796	48	20.7
1997	116,946	1.8	2,110	50	20.8
1998	114,767	2.3	2,598	49	26.1
1999	101,908	1.7	1,741	47	14.4
2000	104,279	2.9	3,075	50	19.8
2001	109,250	2.8	3,063	50	20.8

gional effect. Bears feed heavily on acorns in the fall, but oaks are uncommon in several northern counties where beech is abundant. If beechnut crops are poor, bears in those counties either den early or move south to look for acorns, which affects harvest in both areas. For example, a record 203 bears were killed in Potter County in the 2000 season, when beechnuts were extremely abundant, but last year, when beechnuts were scarce, the harvest dropped 42 percent, to 117. Meanwhile, harvest increased 8 to 34 percent in the adjacent counties of Cameron, Clinton and Lycoming, where oaks are more common.

Age and Sex Composition

At check stations a tooth is taken from every adult bear and then sent to a lab and aged by a process similar to counting rings on a tree. Cub teeth are recognizable because their canines are new or erupting.

All but seven of the bears brought to check stations last year were aged. Twenty-five percent were less than one year old (cubs), which is slightly

TABLE 2. 2001 BEAR HARVEST BY COUNTY.

County	Harvest	Harvest per 100mi ² Forest	County	Harvest	Harvest per 100mi ² Forest
Clinton	267	34.0	Schuylkill	47	8.4
Lycoming	242	24.7	Fayette	43	7.4
Pike	177	33.2	Venango	42	7.6
Centre	151	18.2	Mifflin	37	13.4
Tioga	133	16.7	Columbia	36	12.5
Clearfield	130	13.7	Indiana	36	6.1
Cameron	126	32.4	Union	36	19.3
Potter	117	12.0	Wyoming	35	11.6
Elk	109	14.0	Armstrong	34	7.3
McKean	107	11.8	Cambria	25	4.7
Huntingdon	99	14.6	Clarion	25	6.0
Luzerne	95	14.0	Susquehanna	21	3.4
Warren	92	11.8	Dauphin	18	6.5
Forest	81	19.8	Lebanon	14	10.5
Somerset	76	9.9	Snyder	9	5.2
Monroe	65	12.4	Fulton	7	2.4
Carbon	61	19.3	Juniata	7	2.7
Westmoreland	61	9.2	Berks	6	1.5
Jefferson	58	11.8	Butler	6	1.2
Wayne	56	9.2	Northampton	6	3.9
Sullivan	55	13.6	Northumberland	6	2.7
Bedford	52	7.3	Perry	5	1.3
Blair	52	14.7	Lehigh	3	2.4
Bradford	47	6.7	Montour	2	4.2
Lackawanna	47	13.8	Franklin	1	0.3

above average (23 percent) but not considered detrimental. A small increase in cub harvest may have resulted because abundant food kept females out of dens later than usual. Sex ratio among harvested cubs was approximately equal (Table 3).

One-year-old bears accounted for 34 percent of the harvest and were the most common age class to be killed (Table 3). Males outnumbered females almost 3 to 2 in this group. In older age classes the opposite was true, as progressively fewer bears were killed and females increasingly outnumbered males. As a result, hunters were almost three times more likely to kill a bear less than 3 years old, but 56 percent of the time it was a male. If an older bear was shot, 71 percent of the time it was a female. In the end, however, almost equal numbers were harvested

(1,589 females vs. 1,474 males), which has been the case most years since 1980.

This type of age distribution suggests that male and female cubs are equally vulnerable to hunting, but males quickly become more susceptible as yearlings. Juvenile males travel farther than juvenile females, and they often disperse into unfamiliar areas — both of which may increase their vulnerability. Many females escape hunters every year because they den earlier, before the mid-November hunting season. Thus, more females probably survive into older age classes. This would account for the greater abundance of females in the harvest of older bears.

Harvest Rate and Population Estimate

WCOs, technicians and biologists tagged 428 bears last year prior to hunting season. Of those, 89 were taken by hunt-

ers, yielding a harvest rate of 20.8 percent. The average harvest rate from 1980 through 2000 was 20.7 percent (Table 1). Because harvest rates have changed little, the bigger harvests in recent years are due to increasing bear numbers, not from hunters killing a larger percentage of the population.

The statewide, preseason bear population estimate in 2001 was approximately 14,000, and the 2002 population should be similar. Population estimates are based on the ratio of tagged to untagged bears seen at check stations and the number of bears tagged before the season. Recovering tags is one of the primary reasons we have check stations.

Timing of Kills

Typical of previous 3-day seasons, 67 percent of the harvest occurred on Monday, 22 percent on Tuesday and 11 percent on Wednesday. Few bears were killed by 7 a.m. each day, but harvests were high during the next three hours (7 to 10 a.m.). By noon the first day, nearly 1,300 bears, 41 percent of the harvest, had been shot (Table 4).

Harvest decreased in the late morning hours and remained low during mid-day. In the late afternoon hours it increased again and continued increasing until sunset. This trend was apparent all three days (Table 4). Interestingly, the evening harvest did not match the large morning kill during the first day, but they were almost equal during the second day and slightly reversed by the third day. The slight jump in harvest at the end of the third day is somewhat surprising given that many hunters leave for Thanksgiving.

Although less than 1 percent of bears were killed before 7 a.m., nearly three-quarters were male. Sex ratios were approximately equal during all other hours. Aver-

age weights were also greatest during the first one to two hours, and similar the rest of the day (Table 4). Thus, early morning hunters killed considerably fewer bears, but of those, a greater percentage were large males than during any other time of the day. This may lend some support to the claim that old males quickly learn to avoid hunters once the season begins.

Average Weights of Harvested Bears

Weights were obtained for 3,045 bears. Of those, 106 weighed more than 400 pounds (calculated live weight), and 41 weighed more than 500. The largest bear had a field-dressed weight of 564 pounds and a calculated live weight of 666. He was shot in Lycoming County, but 34 other counties had at least one bear weighing more than 400 pounds, indicating that large bears are widely distributed. Bruins this big, however, accounted for only 3.5 percent of the harvest. The typical bear killed by 75 percent of the hunters weighed between 70 and 235 pounds (Table 5).

Average weights did not differ sig-

TABLE 3. AGE, SEX, AND AVERAGE WEIGHT OF BEARS HARVESTED IN 2001.

Age	Number Harvested ^a	Percent Male	Avg. Live Wt (lbs)	
			Female	Male
cub	775	50.5	75	88
1	1052	58.9	137	171
2	374	57.5	194	242
3	287	35.0	186	316
4	136	39.7	203	406
5	132	28.0	205	418
6	71	23.9	220	466
7	57	24.6	224	509
8	34	14.7	224	499
9	47	6.4	221	466
10	32	6.3	222	426
11	17	23.5	241	569
12	13	23.1	257	491
13+	29	20.7	241	524

^a 7 adult bears were not aged.

TABLE 4. 2001 BEAR HARVEST BY HOUR.

Hour	Number Killed ^a			Percent Male	Avg. Live Wt. in pounds
	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.		
6-7 AM	23	2	4	72	220
7-8 AM	312	50	29	55	190
8-9 AM	299	87	46	53	176
9-10 AM	219	100	47	43	161
10-11 AM	209	81	38	49	168
11-12 AM	188	75	35	39	177
12-1 PM	120	36	15	50	170
1-2 PM	136	45	14	46	181
2-3 PM	142	40	21	44	167
3-4 PM	194	58	33	49	172
4-5 PM	201	96	65	46	177

^aDate of death was not available for 3 bears.

nificantly between regions for either young (cub through 3 years old) or adult bears. Statewide, cubs averaged 82 pounds; 1- to 3-year-old males, 203 pounds; 1- to 3-year-old females, 160 pounds; adult males, 441; and adult females, 217. These calculated live weights are similar to past years.

Conclusions

The 3,063 bears taken in 2001 represented approximately 20 percent of the statewide bear population. Overharvest is not occurring, despite two consecutive years of more than 3,000 bears being killed, because a similar percentage has been removed almost every year for the past two decades and yet the population remains at an all-time high. Larger harvests are due to the bear population growing. In fact, the current harvest objective of 20 percent may not be enough to stabilize the population.

Given that population estimates remain high and no alarming results were detected in the 2001 harvest, a similar season was adopted for 2002. A harvest of up to 3,000 bears is anticipated, if weather and food supplies are favorable.

An additional season was approved

for this year, in Pike, Monroe and Carbon counties, to be held the first week of deer season. This season is intended to address the growing number of bear problems in that area. An appreciable harvest is possible, but predicting how large it will be is difficult because a concurrent deer and bear season has not been held for many decades. Uncertainty is one of the reasons the season is in

only three counties.

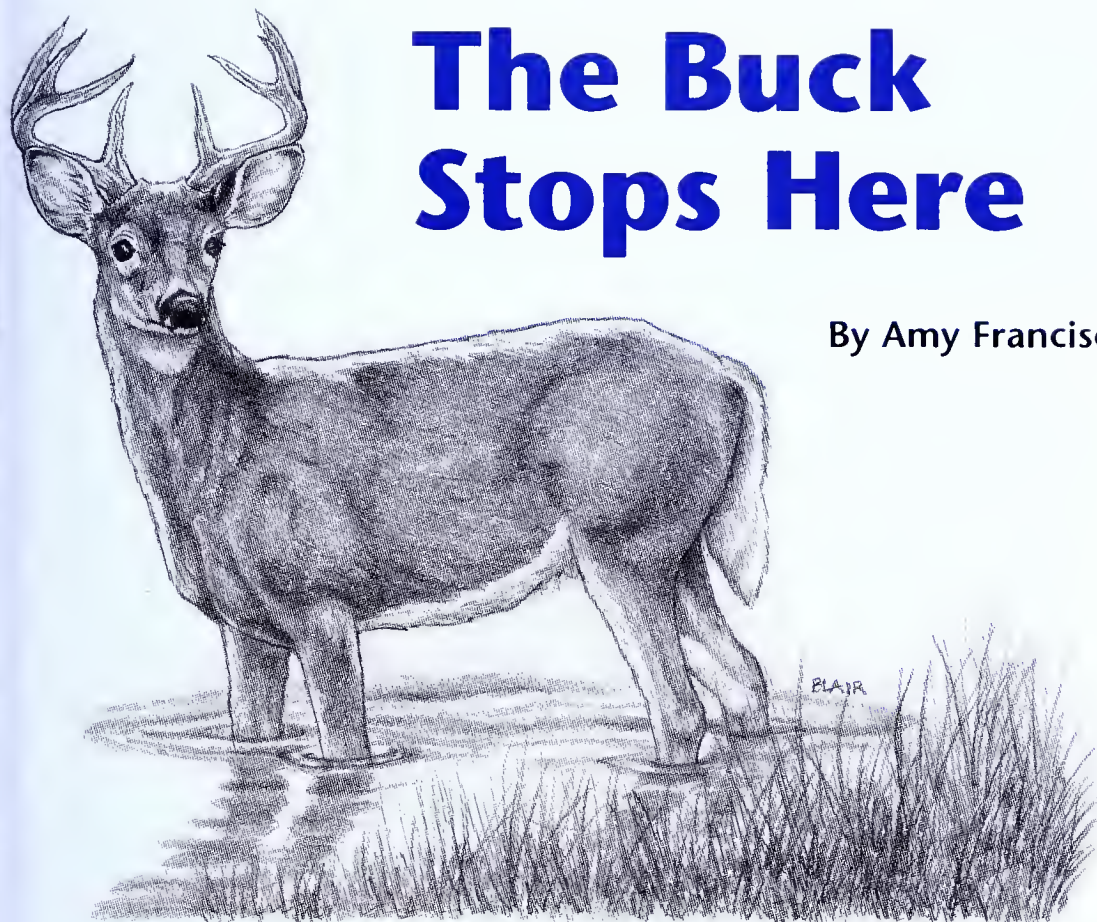
Nevertheless, check stations will be collecting data as usual, during both seasons. (See the 2002 Digest for a listing of locations).

Bear hunting in Pennsylvania is enjoyed by more than 100,000 hunters. Those who are successful provide a wealth of information about our bear population when they bring a bear to a check station. Visiting a check station not only keeps you in compliance with the law, it is a large part of how we monitor the bear resource. □

TABLE 5. FREQUENCY OF WEIGHTS COLLECTED AT CHECK STATIONS.

Calculated Live weight ^a (pounds)	Number of Bears	Cumulative Percent
100 or less	694	22.8
101-150	640	43.8
151-200	804	70.2
201-250	470	85.6
251-300	175	91.4
301-350	97	94.6
351-400	59	96.5
401-450	34	97.6
451-500	31	98.7
501-550	23	99.4
551-600	9	99.7
601 or more	9	100.0

^a18 percent added if field-dressed.



The Buck Stops Here

By Amy Francisco

THE SETTING SUN slanting over my right shoulder illuminated the buck with an otherworldly glow. He was magnificent, with his head turned towards me, his imposing body doubled by his reflection in the pond. Maybe that's why his rack seemed so incredibly huge to this novice hunter, or does that first buck tend to grow each time one thinks back to that special moment? I don't know, but this buck will always hold a special place in my heart.

I sensed the irony of the situation as I looked at the buck. Just moments before I had unceremoniously slammed out my back door, and was in the process of noisily chambering a cartridge into my .30-06 when the buck appeared. No more than 60 yards separated us, and I, as usual, was totally unprepared. Having been temporarily blinded many times by tennis opponents' lobs into the sun, I suspected that at least the bright backlighting was to my

advantage. Birdwatching instincts took over. The ever-present binoculars automatically zoomed in on the animal. No, this wasn't a vision, but rather what I'd been waiting for the last three years. Can you pull the trigger? Can you really do it and become a big game hunter? I had my doubts.

Raised in a nonhunting family, I was the quintessential flower child of the late '60s. Tree hugging came naturally to me then, and I still do hug trees on occasion (especially when in a treestand and the wind blows and the "cradle" rocks). I cried when I watched Bambi, Thumper, Dumbo and the rest of the Disney gang.

The first chip was knocked off my shoulder in 1996, during Pennsylvania's inaugural Becoming an Outdoors-Woman program. My education had begun, and all it took was

the Game Commission's banner that read, "Conservation ... Preservation ... Education."

Those three things say it all, and suddenly my thinking that all hunters were red-plaided Woolriched Neanderthals became, "Oh, so what you're telling me is that hunters are conservationists." I became a hunter.

Those Bambi movies do come back to haunt me, however. Anthropomorphizing (giving animals human characteristics) comes naturally after a Disney upbringing. Deer happily dancing about in the woods until *blam!* Nasty hunter has shot Bambi's dad. Pigeonholing hunters as "the guys with the black hats" is far more the norm today, as hunting has become increasingly less of a traditional way of life for families.

So actually raising that rifle to my shoulder and pulling the trigger had become a bone of contention in my hunting life. Did I have what it takes? Mother Nature gave me a nudge, however. As I stood there admiring the deer, with self-doubt invading my psyche, I noticed a glitch. As the buck pivoted towards me, the bright sun illuminated a shattered lower jaw.

Memories of the previous year's deer "training," and in particular yesterday's hunt surfaced in a nanosecond of flashback: Frequent forays into the woods and local orchard to detect sign; elation over a pile of fresh droppings; scanning all spindly trees for rubs; tracking prints in a new snow; an occasional close deer encounter while birding; sighting-in my rifle at the gun club. I was determined to im-

prove my woodswoman's skills. This is a test, Amy, this is only a test. But this was a test that was very personal to me. I wanted to prove to myself that I was capable of taking that final step towards becoming a big game hunter.

A year of persistent, albeit good-natured background whining had culminated in the construction of a deer hunting treestand in our woods. Carpentry not being my husband Bill's forte, he had to ponder the possibilities for a few months before he felt he was ready to tackle a project of this magnitude. Finally, one fall day,

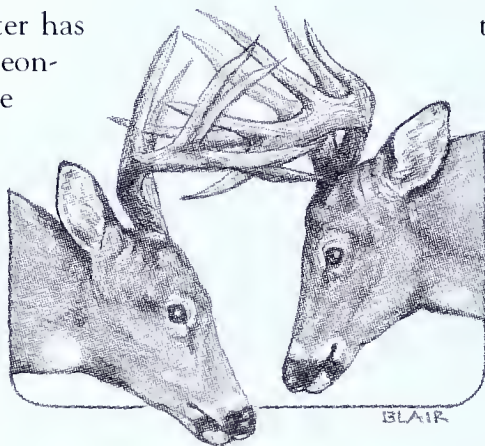
husband and son trekked to the predetermined tree with lumber, hammer, nails and bolts. Voila! A deer stand was born.

Weeks before the season, I managed to overcome my fear of heights by climbing daily into the stand. Every afternoon until dusk, I hunkered

down in my perch and watched the goings-on in our woods.

In previous years I had passed up several shots while deer hunting. Even though we live in an essentially rural area, it has changed considerably, and safety is a constant concern, despite being outside of safety zones, with our 8-acre woodlot bordered by a macadam and a dirt road, in addition to a long neighboring driveway. In the quarter century that we have resided in our Berks County homestead, we have sadly watched the disappearance of once-abundant grouse and pheasants with the encroachment of new homes. Habitat seems to be shrinking on a daily, if not hourly, basis. However, with my birds-eye view and downward shooting trajectory from the stand, I realized that my time had come. It was now or never.

Looking at that mangled jaw, I recalled



yesterday's hunt. I had stood patiently in my stand, imagining Bill's circuitous mini-drive through the orchard and around the massive boulder field in the upper woods. His plan was to quietly push a buck in my direction. Seemingly dropped from the sky, two does suddenly appeared. "Be still my beating heart. No antlers here." Beyond the does I heard some rustling, and could just make out another deer. As I glassed the length of the body through the thick trees, I discovered a fourth. Turns out two bucks were sparring halfheartedly, and finally one ambled off through the underbrush. Not comfortable taking the obstructed shot, I opted to wait. In the meantime, buck fever had consumed my mind and body. No oxygen was getting anywhere — how could it, with no inhalation or exhalation, and a full-body tingling was threatening to rob me of all my faculties, mental and physical. Breathe, Amy, breathe, or you're going to faint.

Lest we forget, Bill was forging towards me at this very moment. The buck was a wee bit fatigued after his brief tussle with his competitor, and he proceeded to lie down. The tree trunk provided the perfect concealment, as I saw only a tip of antler now and then.

As soon as Bill came into view the two does plunged straight towards me, and the buck hightailed it in the opposite direction, quickly cresting a nearby hill. Once again I had missed my opportunity. Having a scapegoat handy, I vented on my unsuspecting husband, and then a haunting single shot echoed in the valley. "My" buck had been bagged by another hunter. "Son of a gun," my husband and I said simultaneously. Oh, the hunter's frustration, the sinking feeling, the woulda, coulda, shoulda.

That was yesterday, however, and this was the present. Don't allow that animal to suffer, I thought. Make a clean shot. I lifted the Winchester to my shoulder, confirmed that the shot was safe, lined up the crosshairs and pulled the trigger. *Blam!*

Nothing happened.

I was dumbfounded. How could I possibly have missed a broadside shot at such close range? I chambered another cartridge, lined up the crosshairs and squeezed the trigger. *Blam!* This time the buck charged into a thicket.

"Amy, did you get him?" Bill yelled from the garage.

I was speechless. Motionless. Frozen in time. I had failed the test, or so I thought. The buck had managed to run 20 or so yards into the woods without leaving a drop of blood. We soon found him in a briar patch, with one bullet through the heart, and one in the lungs.

This bittersweet buck taught me yet another important lesson. Imagine my self-righteous indignation that another hunter had made such a poor shot. A few days later, in my stand during doe season (this happened before the concurrent season), I was presented with a running broadside shot. I took it, and missed the "sweet spot." It was a gut shot, and I had to trail the doe, with the help of a neighbor, and finish it off.

How quickly those chips are being knocked off my shoulder. As much as all hunters want to make the perfect shot, it doesn't always play out as we envision. Being brought down a peg or two teaches humility. Learning from limited hunting experiences has been one of the toughest, yet possibly the surest, ways of driving home nature's lessons. Now, one of my goals will be to try to never shoot hurriedly or indiscriminately, potentially wounding and losing an animal through my own carelessness.

The 7-point rack hangs in a prominent spot in our house. It's a powerful reminder of all the lessons to be learned in the outdoors. There's still so much more to learn, though. I'm so glad that the buck stopped here. Now I'm truly a deer hunter. □

"The important thing is not to stop questioning."

~ Albert Einstein

Look to the Source

By Larissa Rose

PGC Information Writer

Photos by the author

IT'S A FAIRLY warm morning when we slide into our hip boots and trek to one of the ponds. We hang back and watch as the biologist approaches the artificial nesting platform, causing the honking mother to flush. He reaches in the bowl-shaped container atop a pole — complete with a predator guard — and gently removes two of the eggs, then holds them in the water to see how well they float.

"They've still got a day or two," he declares.

So we move on to the next pond, and the next and the next. None of the eggs are ready to hatch yet, so we decide to head out onto the lake.

When most people hear the word "Pymatuning," they think of geese. Canada geese can be found there throughout the year, and during the spring and fall migrations, large concentrations use the lake and ponds on the management area as a stop-over. Thousands of hunters apply each year for a chance to use one of the blinds in the area for a morning during goose season. Despite the area's long history with Canada geese, their fall numbers, as well as hunter success, have been declining during the past 10 years. This is unusual, as the number of resident geese in Pennsylvania has increased dramatically over the past 30 years from being uncommon to more than 250,000.

The decline in the goose numbers at Pymatuning is cause for concern. To figure out what might be happening, Game Commission waterfowl specialists have begun looking at gosling recruitment, that is, the number that successfully hatch, leave the nest and survive the first few months of life. For decades, leg-banding programs have provided estimates of harvest rates, but in-



PGC BIOLOGIST KEVIN JACOBS floats two eggs he removed from a nest box to see how well they float. The higher the eggs float, the closer they are to hatching. These eggs still have a day or two to go.

formation on what happens to young birds before July, when leg-banding takes place, is largely unknown. So in April 2001, a 2-year study was launched to determine Canada goose nest success and gosling production, as well as to estimate gosling survival from hatch to July.

In early April of 2001 and 2002, nest searches were conducted on the management area. In 2001, 163 nests in early incubation stage were found, and a total of 837 eggs were marked.

A nesting goose lays one egg a day, and when her clutch is complete, she begins to incubate them. So the first egg laid will be the dirtiest, and the last will be the cleanest and, while they will all hatch within 24 hours of each other, they normally hatch in the order they were laid.

Biologists float the cleanest and dirtiest eggs in water to determine what stage of incubation they are in, depending on how they float — the higher they float, the closer they are to hatching. This allows them to estimate nest age, as well as hatch dates, when they will return to web-tag the goslings. The eggs are marked with the nest number and egg number (in order from oldest to youngest), and nests are marked with flags, as well as recorded with a Global Positioning System (GPS) unit. In 2002, 183 nests were located, and 951 eggs were marked.

In late April, the web-tagging begins. This is where I came in. After several attempts to find goslings on the impoundments, we take to the lake. PGC Wildlife Biologist Kevin Jacobs pilots a canoe, while college student Susan Ellis and I man kayaks. Susan heads off in one direction to check nests, while I follow Kevin's canoe toward the middle of the lake.

Throughout the lake are areas where the vegetation is so thick it creates floating islands, and many geese nest on them. The islands are strong enough to hold our



MANY GEESE AT PYMATUNING make their nests on islands of vegetation in the lake. Downy feathers lining the nest protect the eggs and keep them warm.

weight, but we have to poke around with our paddles to make sure we don't step on a weak spot.

Our first few stops are fairly uneventful, with nests containing eggs that still have a few more days to go. What is amazing to me, though, is picking up one of those warm eggs. I can hold it up to my ear and hear the gosling inside, pecking on the shell as it begins its escape. Some of the yet-to-be-hatched birds are actually peeping. "They're communicating with the other goslings, still in their shells," Kevin explains. "They're letting each other know that it's time to come out." These little conversations between eggs actually cause them to hatch within shorter amounts of time of each other.

Some of the nests we check, however, are empty. The goslings from those nests were already tagged, and we're just checking to make sure all of them have successfully left the nest. The results are recorded, and we remove the orange flags that were marking the nest.

The goslings can be tagged in one of three stages: fluffy, wet or in the shell. Fluffy goslings were hatched the previous day, while wet ones may have emerged just that morning. Some-

times, though, a few of the goslings in the nest may have hatched out, while the rest have only begun to “pip,” that is, when the gosling has pecked an opening in the shell.

This is the case in one of the nests we check. One of the eggs has a hole about the size of a pencil eraser in it, and at first glance, I can see some wet feathers through it. When I look closer, though, I can see a tiny, brownish-colored bill, and the black web of a foot. Kevin tells me that, in the egg, the gosling always has its right foot up near its bill, so it’s easy to gently pull out the foot, tag it and put it back in the shell with little disturbance to the hatching process. If the goslings couldn’t be tagged in the shell, it’s possible that many wouldn’t get tagged at all, because by the time we got back the next day, they may have already left the nest.

Kevin holds the egg in the palm of his hand, and uses a pencil tip to make the hole a little bigger — about dime-size. He hooks the end of the pencil under the web, and gently draws the foot out of the shell. Spreading the toes apart, he squeezes the web-tag on, tucks the little foot back in, places the egg in the nest, and covers it up with the downy feathers the mother has been using to keep her eggs protected. We quickly leave the area, so the

mother can return and continue to watch over her eggs, which will soon be goslings.

In 2001, web-tags were placed on 527 of the 555 goslings that hatched. What happened to the rest of the 837 eggs? Before the study, there were only guesses. But now, we know that 202 were taken by predators and 80 were infertile. Seven goslings hatched successfully, but died in the nest, so a total of 549 goslings left the nest. In 2002, 502 of the 568 hatched goslings were web-tagged. Predators took 198 of the 951 eggs, while 185 were infertile. Sixteen goslings died in the nest after hatching, so 552 left the nest.

By the middle of May, all of the goslings have left the nest, so now we must wait until the end of June to get an idea of how many survived their first 45 days of life. In late June, Canada geese are captured and leg-banded throughout the state. At Pymatuning, however, the biologists are looking for birds with web-tags. When one is found, the tag number, date, location and sex are recorded. The web-tag number allows biologists to find out which nest the gosling came from, so the survival rate for



GOSLINGS THAT HAVE begun to hatch can be web-tagged in the egg. Above is the shell after the tiny hole has been enlarged to draw the foot out. Then, a tool is used to squeeze the tag onto the webbing, and the foot is tucked back into the egg so the gosling can continue to hatch out.



THE TINY TAGS are put on the web of the goslings, then the birds are placed back in the nest until they're ready to take to the water. Below is a nest where one of the eggs was infertile, part of Mother Nature's plan to control populations.



Regis Senko



each brood can be determined by dividing the number of goslings recaptured for each brood by the number marked at hatch. The individual survival rates are then averaged to determine the overall survival rate.

In 2001, 163 web-tagged goslings were recaptured in June, and when all the cal-

culations were done, it was determined that 52 percent of the goslings survived from hatch until leg banding. In 2002, 130 were recaptured, for a 49 percent survival rate.

Based on these results, poor gosling recruitment doesn't appear to be the reason for declining fall populations and hunter success rates. Recent leg-bands recovered from harvested geese lead us to believe that the lower populations and hunter success rates are

most likely caused by a decline in the number of migrant Canada geese at Pymatuning during the fall.

Mother Nature will always make sure that 100 percent of the eggs laid will not hatch, and that 100 percent of the hatched goslings won't make it through their first two months. As managers, it's our responsibility to help Mother Nature keep them

from becoming over abundant, and to keep them from becoming scarce. At Pymatuning, the harvest will be carefully watched, and the seasons will likely remain restrictive compared to the rest of the state. In other parts, espe-

cially where geese are causing problems, the harvest may need to be increased. Thanks to this web-banding study, we now know more about the first few weeks in the life of a Canada goose, which will enable us to better manage and protect them. □



Tragedy To Triumph — "Hunt of A Lifetime"

By Gregg Rinkus

ALMOST ANY WAY you look at it, any event serious enough to be called a tragedy is usually life changing. And the trauma of losing a child must rank at or near the top of the list. Some parents never recover. Others learn to live with their pain and do what Reverend Dr. Robert Schuller calls, "turn their scars into stars." That being the case, Tina and Chester Pattison of Harborcreek (Erie County) are a veritable constellation.

In March 1998, Matthew Pattison — Chet's son and Tina's stepson — wanted to go on a moose hunt with his father, a dream he had had

for quite some time. But Matthew was not your typical 18-year-old. He was suffering from Hodgkin's disease, a potentially terminal illness that was first diagnosed in September 1995.

Since he was a young boy, Matthew had shown tremendous interest in the outdoors. At every opportunity he jumped at the chance to accompany his father afield. Whether it was hunting, fishing, camping or simply walking in the woods, Matthew wanted to be at his dad's side, and his stepmother's, too. Love of the outdoors is one of the foundation stones on which the Pattisons and their six sons built a binding family relationship. Little did they realize



just how much that bond would be tested and where their love and faith would someday lead them.

I first learned of Tina Pattison and Hunt of a Lifetime in a letter to the editor of *Bowhunter* magazine. Their story tugged at my very soul and, amazingly, I discovered that the Pattisons live just a few miles northeast of Erie. I quickly contacted Tina and we arranged to meet on a Sunday in September at a memorial-type muzzleloader shoot for her son near Warren.

The old-time rendezvous weekend is an annual event co-sponsored by the Washington County Buckskinners and the Upper Allegheny Muzzleloaders. Normally the shoot occurs in southwestern Pennsylvania, but the groups, spearheaded by Kye Jarosz and Curtis Hollabaugh, had decided to take their show on the road to create interest in another part of the state. They had teamed up with Tina Pattison to offer all generated revenues to her non-profit Hunt of a Lifetime organization. What I learned that afternoon is a story that needs to reach a wider audience. What began with Matthew Pattison's Alberta moose hunt has since grown into something that the Pattisons could never have envisioned. And the story continues to unfold.

Between the day that he was diagnosed with lymphatic cancer until his passing nearly four years later, Matthew and his family had exalted in the heights of ex-

hilaration and languished in the depths of despair. Between those extremes were joys and disappointments, opportunities and roadblocks, victories and defeats. These wide ranges of effects seem to be experienced by most people who battle serious illnesses, particularly when a young person is afflicted. Matthew had a wish — his moose hunt — and Tina would let nothing stand in the way of his dream.

Tina had heard of the Make-a-Wish Foundation, so she went right to them for help. Simply put, this group makes dreams come true for terminally ill young people. But this is where Tina encountered her first obstacle. Matthew was 18 years old and, thus, beyond the range of the foundation. Also, due to ever-increasing pressure from animal rights groups and anti-hunting/gun interests, and a lot of negative press over previous hunting wishes they had funded, Make-a-Wish no longer granted hunting related wishes.

A very determined, not easily dissuaded woman, Tina's resolve to make Matthew's dream come true only intensified. She began calling hunting guides and outfitters all over North America, and virtually anyone else who would listen, telling them of her son's plight, trying to find someone who would help. Through advice from

many people, Tina eventually contacted the Pittsburgh chapter of Safari Club International, a worldwide, non-profit organization that promotes responsible hunting and wildlife conservation. The Pittsburgh chapter contacted the Wyoming chapter of Safari Outfitters (no connection), which also went to work on this cause.

After months of hard work and countless dead ends, Tina was beginning to feel she was running out of options and time. Then, in August 1998, she received a phone call that would change the lives of many people; one of many seeds that she had cast had finally taken root.

Tina was informed that through a large contingent of caring individuals, groups and businesses in Cody, Wyoming and Nordegg, Alberta, Canada, arrangements had been made to have both Matthew and his father go on an all expenses paid moose hunting trip in Canada.

Matthew's dream finally came true that fall. Accompanied by his father and hunting outfitters Clayton and Gene Grosso, Matthew bagged a huge bull moose with an antler spread of 56 inches. A few months later — on April 28, 1999 — Matthew Pattison died of heart and liver failure. He was 19 years old. But the story continues.

As I talked with the Pattisons on that steamy September afternoon at the muzzleloader shoot, our tears flowed freely. Tina said Matt's last year had been hard . . . very, very hard. It was obvious he was losing the battle.

The Hodgkins disease was wreaking havoc with his entire immune system. Pain racked his body and took a serious physical and emotional toll. But it could have been much worse, Tina said. After all, Matthew had a life-long dream to look forward to. He would often say, "I'll be all right because I'm going on that moose hunt."

Without this goal — a glimmering light of hope — Tina and Chet have no doubt that Matt would have succumbed much sooner. His will, his survival instinct, and his dream hunt all helped sustain him through those extraordinarily difficult times.

Beyond the tragedy of losing their son, Tina and Chet Pattison have, indeed, turned their scars into stars. They've actually transcended their own painful experience by reaching out to others with similar needs. Motivated by her own family's trials and tribulations during Matt's illness, Tina was inspired to do something meaningful to help Matt's name live on. She did not want others to encounter the same barriers when trying to fulfill a child's last wish.

After some deep soul-searching, Tina established a new organization, Hunt of a Lifetime, which grants hunting and fishing trips to seriously ill children and young adults (age 21 and under). Very matter-of-factly, she said that it felt like the right thing to do. "I know how I felt trying to keep all of that going," Tina affirmed. "I don't ever want to see another parent go through that. I don't ever want another mother or father to go through the channels I had to. I want it to be a simple phone call."

Tina made it clear that she harbors no ill feelings against the Make-a-Wish Foundation. She does not agree with their position of not granting hunting related wishes, but that's out of her control, something not worth her energies to fight. At that time, she had enough on her hands; she didn't need another cause. In retrospect, Tina believes that their rejection may actually have been a blessing. Without their denial, she probably would never have encountered the fantastic people out there who were so willing to help in her time of need.

An Erie County real estate attorney helped get the fledgling organization off the ground. Due to these efforts, on August 12, 1999, Hunt of a Lifetime became a legal

non-profit foundation in Pennsylvania.

Since then it has been virtually non-stop activity for the Pattisons. Their story has been carried in many local, regional, state and national newspapers and periodicals, radio talk shows, through speaking engagements and very soon, TV. With this exposure, donations of money, office equipment, hunting and fishing trips, guns, camping gear, clothing, airplane tickets, and nearly anything else directly or remotely related to Tina's cause have been pouring into Hunt of a Lifetime headquarters.

Ironically, as the word continues to spread, more and more sponsor organizations are redirecting all or a portion of their funding from Make-a-Wish to Hunt of a Lifetime. Recently, Make-a-Wish and two other wish-granting organizations decided to refer future hunting requests to Hunt of a Lifetime.

And the responses have become even more amazing. Two anonymous \$1,000 donations arrived in the Pattison mailbox. Mail order giant Cabela's weighed in with a substantial check, as did Bass Pro Shops, the Pennsylvania Game Commission, National Wild Turkey Federation, Ruffed Grouse Society, Pheasants Forever, Trout Unlimited, Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, and the Pennsylvania Outdoor Writers Association to name but a few.

One man sent in \$300 and said that his son had died two days before his 18th birthday. He confided in Tina that his fondest memories were of the two of them hunting together. Outfitters began calling, offering free trips for all types of fishing and hunting trips across North America. One sportsman called to donate a fully paid week-long package featuring caribou and black bear hunting and fishing in Quebec worth an estimated \$8,000. A hunter from Florida called and told Tina that his son was totally disabled and would never be able to go hunting or fishing with him. He offered to take a youngster on a fully guided

alligator hunt, with lodging provided, every year for as long as they wanted. And these are just a small sample of the offers. "The response has been overwhelming. You can't imagine how many wonderful people are out there."

At the same time, Tina realizes that her message — no, her dream, her passion — is reaching only a small segment of the population. Nearly every day she hears stories about critically ill youngsters who have never heard of Hunt of a Lifetime. To counter this, Tina also related stories of other wish kids who, like Matthew, did have their wishes come true. Hunt of a Lifetime participants have taken trips for Russian boar, white-tailed deer, elk, black bear, Canada geese, and the list continues to grow.

According to Tina, the real need right now is getting the word out about Hunt of a Lifetime. "We've got to let the public know we're here. We've got more trips available than kids to fill them. It should be the other way around," she said.

Tina gets angry when she hears about sick children who get stuck in the middle of a political tug-of-war. "Isn't it a sad commentary that animal rights activists and anti-gun and anti-hunting proponents put their social and political agendas before the needs of a critically ill child? Not every kid wants to go to Disney World. We're here to help the kids first. Everything else should be secondary. Some people just don't understand."

If you do understand and would like to help, write: Tina Pattison, c/o Hunt of a Lifetime, 6297 Buffalo Road, Harborcreek, PA 16421.

As she said to me, "Contrary to popular belief, one person can make a difference." Having met Tina, that is obvious. But, if you still have doubts, just ask her Hunt of a Lifetime kids. □



Cooperative Effort

By Dave Shaul

Deputy WCO, Armstrong County

IT WAS January 9, 2000, the last day of the muzzleloader season, and I had just spent the day hunting with fellow deputy John Hendrickson and some other friends. We had a great day, even though no deer were taken. I no sooner got home than the dispatcher from the region office in Ligonier called and said he had just gotten a call from a hunter who had witnessed four untagged deer being taken from the woods on SGL 259. After getting the witness's phone number, I called Deputy Hendrickson and told him about the incident. He said he would be at my place in 20 minutes.

I then phoned the witness, Mr. Good. He said that his brother and nephew were at a parking lot on SGL 259 when two individuals in a red

pickup pulled in and parked. They asked Mr. Good about the beaver dams up the hollow, and he, in turn, asked if they were trapping, because he didn't see any guns in the truck. They said that they had hit a deer earlier, had tracked it to the dams and now were returning to find it. After some more small talk, Mr. Good and his companions headed into the woods.

Shortly after getting set on stand, he heard people talking on the hillside above him. He noticed two men walking through the brush, and soon after, these two individuals came down the hillside, each dragging a deer. He immediately recognized them as the same two who were in the red pickup. We'll call them Moe and Curly. They stopped approximately 50 yards from Mr. Good, and the older of the two, Moe, took up another blood trail, while Curly

continued to drag one of the deer out of the woods. Mr. Good watched as Moe continued to follow the blood trail until he found another deer lying in a stream. After field-dressing the third deer, Moe left and went to get the second deer he had been dragging earlier, and started out of the woods with it. Mr. Good hadn't noticed a tag on either of the first two deer Moe and Curly had been dragging, and didn't see a tag on the third deer, either.

About an hour passed, and the men hadn't returned for the third deer, when Mr. Good noticed them walking on the ridge above him. A short time later they returned from where they had dragged the first two deer, dragging a fourth, and proceeded to the one that Moe had found in the stream. Not seeing a tag on the fourth deer, Mr. Good climbed down from his stand to see what was going on. Seeing him climb down, Moe and Curly wasted little time getting the deer out of there. Mr. Good then went to get his hunting companions and tell them what he had witnessed. They decided the best thing to do was get what information they could and notify the Game Commission as soon as possible.



On the way back to their vehicle they came across Moe and Curly sitting along the trail with the two untagged deer. After some small talk, Mr. Good and his companions continued on their way. Back at the road they spotted the red pickup, and Mr. Good looked into the bed to see if the first two deer were there. The deer weren't there, only blood and hair. Back at his vehicle he wrote down the license number, make and model of the pickup, and a description of Moe and Curly. While Mr. Good and his companions were stowing their hunting gear away, Moe and Curly came out of the woods with the two deer, loaded them into the pickup and left.

A few minutes later Mr. Good and his brother started for home. On their way they came upon Moe and Curly stopped alongside another pickup, talking to another individual, this person then turned around and followed Moe and Curly down the road and out of sight. Mr. Good could only get a color, make and model of the second vehicle, but couldn't make out the license number.

I told him that we would be investigating this incident, and that I would be in touch with him. He told me that he and his brother would gladly testify at a hearing if need be, which I was glad because many times witnesses don't want to get involved.

John arrived a short time later, and we were on our way to the address that came back from a check on the license plate number from the red truck. On the way we discussed problems we might encounter at the site. A few months earlier we had a training session about searches, so we figured the information would be put to use if the deer were somewhere on the property.

We found the address we were looking for, and quickly spotted the two vehicles fitting the descriptions given by Mr. Good. The pickup that Moe and Curly had been driving was parked to the side of the driveway, and before we walked to the house John took a look in the bed. "Dave, I think you need to take a look over here," he said. There were four antlerless deer in the truck, and none of them were tagged.

We walked to the house and knocked on the door. A woman opened it, and we identified ourselves and told her the reason for our visit. She said that her son owned the truck, and that she would get him. A minute later the owner of the truck, Larry, came outside to talk with us. Larry said that he had been at work all day, but that he let his brother and brother-in-law use his truck. He said he had no knowledge of the deer in the vehicle.

While talking to Larry, another person, Larry's nephew, Shemp, came outside. We immediately recognized him from an incident that had taken place during the regular deer season. Satisfied that Larry was not involved, we asked Shemp a few questions. He said that he had been at work and didn't know a thing about the deer in the back of his uncle's truck.

Shemp's pickup, however, fit the description of the vehicle that Mr. Good had seen turning around and following Moe and Curly. Shemp gave us permission to look in his truck, and we didn't find anything, but we again asked him if he knew anything about the deer. He again said he didn't. We got Moe's phone number from Larry, so we called him and asked if he would come over to Larry's house to answer a few questions about the deer. He agreed, and arrived in 30 minutes.

Moe said that he and Curly had

used Larry's pickup to go muzzleloader hunting, but didn't have much to say concerning the four untagged deer in the back. After John informed Moe that his brother-in-law Larry, who we believed had nothing to do with the incident, could be charged with illegally possessing four deer, Moe decided to come clean. Moe said that he and Curly had shot the deer and brought them to Larry's house, and that Larry had no knowledge of the deer. John and I told Moe that we would be contacting him and Curly to get this sorted out. We took photos of the deer in the back of Larry's truck, and then loaded them into my truck and left for home.

On the way we decided to drop off one of the deer to a family that could always use some additional food. After that we headed to John's house to unload the others. We weren't there more than a few minutes when John's phone rang. It was the person we had just given the deer to, and he said we might want to come back and take a look at the deer he had just skinned. Back we went, and on the deer carcass we saw a large wound with copper fragments in the wound channel, definitely not from a lead ball, as required during the flintlock season at that time. We took a few more photos and were on our way home again.

Early the next morning I went to John's house, and with help from his brother-in-law Howie and his son Jared, we had the remaining three deer skinned in no time. It wasn't much of a surprise that all three had large wounds with copper fragments. We took some more photos for evidence, and then found homes for those deer. We then contacted WCO Barry Seth, who had been out of town, and filled him in on the incident.

We decided to interview Moe and Curly the following evening at SGL 247. I contacted Mr. Good to let him know what was going on, and to have him and his brother write down everything they saw that day. He said that wouldn't be a problem, and again said that they would testify if needed.

John got in touch with Moe and Curly and made the necessary arrangements. We decided to record the interviews, to make sure that nothing was missed and to save on some of the paperwork. After being advised of their rights, Moe and Curly confessed to killing the deer. Their accounts of the day's events were exactly as Mr. Good had told us.

Through these interviews, though, we learned that Shemp, who continually said he knew nothing about the deer in his uncle's truck, did in fact follow Moe and Curly home from their hunt, and not only helped load the first two deer they had taken home before getting the third and fourth out of the woods, but also made arrangements to have the deer processed. After the interviews, WCO Seth just shook his head. It seems he had just cited Moe and Shemp for possessing untagged deer during the antlerless deer season.

After we sorted everything out, we filed the appropriate citations at the local magistrate's office. WCO Seth then thought it might be a good idea to talk with Armstrong County District Attorney Scott Andressi, considering the amount of the fines and revocation periods involved. Mr.

Andressi not only agreed to look things over for us, but also to handle the prosecution for the Game Commission at the hearing.

Mr. Good and his brother arrived as promised at the hearing, and brought along a computer printout detailing everything they had witnessed on the day the deer were killed. Mr. Good and his brother gave their testimony, Deputy Hendrickson and I gave our testimony, and the defendants had their say. Moe, Curly and Shemp were found guilty on all charges. Their fines came to \$8,500 plus court costs, and amassed a combined total of 13 years of hunting license revocations.

This case was without a doubt a team effort. Mr. Good and his brother are to be commended for their keen eye on detail, and their willingness to go the extra mile to do what was right and testify, and to Armstrong County District Attorney Scott Andressi, who is also an avid hunter, for his guidance and expertise in handling the prosecution. With their help, we were able to successfully close this case. □

Days of Yore



RANDALL McCASLIN from Edinboro sent in this photo taken in the 1930s, and says that Uncle JOHN LUDWIG on the far left behind the bear is the only person he can positively identify. Uncle John lived in the Sizerville area in Cameron County, so the bear was probably taken near there.

The Minnisink Hunting and Fishing Club

By Rob Wegner

PENNSYLVANIA'S great white-tailed deer hunting tradition is steeped with legendary bucks: the Arthur Young deer shot in 1830, in McKean County, that scored 175 $\frac{4}{8}$, which is the oldest buck in the Boone and Crockett record book; the majestic Strohecker buck, with its 26 ebony points, shot in 1898 in the High Valley section of the Seven Mountains of central Pennsylvania; and, of course, the bizarre, 28-point shot on December 8, 1910, by William Pearl "Bunker" Rhines, the famous pitcher for the Cincinnati Reds. This buck's awesome brow tines almost touch one another and measure 16 $\frac{7}{8}$ and 17 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches.

We also think of Pennsylvania's legendary deer slayers. Philip Tome (1782-1855), the Pine Creek deer slayer; and E. N. Woodcock (1844-1917), who tracked endless miles of deer trails in the "Black Forest," shooting some 3,000 deer during his life.

We also recall the hundreds of legendary deer camps that dotted the landscape of Pennsylvania deer country. The legendary Minnisink Hunting and Fishing Club in the Pocono Mountains, thoroughly documented for us in Oliver Howard Wolfe's *Back Log and Pine Knot: A Chronicle of the Minnisink Hunting and Fishing Club* (1916), is one of the most cherished books in my deer hunting library of more than 2,000 titles.

Located in Pike County on High



PA Historical & Museum Commission

JUST after the turn of the century, the Minnisink Hunting and Fishing Club hunted on state land near Dingmans Falls in Pike County.

Knob, near Dingmans Falls, this camp was a special place, a sacred space, for 10 deer hunters: William L. Fox, O. Howard Wolfe (O.H.), Horace W. Shel mire (Hoddy), David R. Shel mire, Walter Peirson, Jr. (Wawa), Dr. George R. Fleming, S. Judson Parrott (Pop), Dr. George E. Levis (Doc), and two honorary members, David Shel mire and J. M. Wolfe.

The Minnisink Hunting and Fishing Club came into existence in May of 1900, when O.H. Wolfe and Bill Fox camped out with blankets near Perkiomen Creek. O.H. fondly recalls the first campsite "That first night was spent on Mother Earth under a crude shelter of green boughs that oozed and dripped dew and red ants till morning brought a blessed relief to aching joints."

During the early years, members hunted deer from 12x12-foot canvas tents. Suppers in these tents were elaborate affairs with the best-stocked larder that could be bought and hauled 20 miles back into the mountain.

Accounts about deer hunters from northeastern Pennsylvania often dominated the story telling at the Minnisink Club's fire pits during the early years of tenting. Old Elias Scott, who died at an advanced age in 1868, reportedly shot 11 deer one day. During one season he got 175 deer, and once took three deer with one shot. The Minnisink deer camp boys also discussed the deer hunting tales of Marcus N.B. Killam (1815-1902), the greatest deer slayer of Pike County, who killed 900 deer, including a superb buck weighing 306 pounds dressed.

During the first decade of the 20th century these fire pit stories revolved around a vast variety of subjects, such as the great conservation work of Dr. J.H. Kalbfus, the Secretary of the Game Commission, who worked hard to preserve the heritage of white-tailed deer hunting, the banning of buckshot in 1905, deer restocking in 1906, the murder of Game Protector Seely Houk on March 2, 1906 and, of course, the famous buck law of 1907.

In 1914, the club received permission to lease an acre of land and erect a shack.

As the 1915 season approached, the Minnisink deer camp boys were reading with great delight Col. Henry W. Shoemaker's *Pennsylvania Deer and Their Horns*. That book of whitetail nostalgia contains one of the finest photo collections of Pennsylvania's greatest deer slayers ever assembled.

Rumbles and bumps occurred on the Hawley Road as the season approached. In his chronicle of the camp, O.H. captures the scene as Peck's Pond mobilized its little army of corduroy and khaki-clad, red-capped riflemen for the annual foray. "There is no time for visiting yet. All is bustle as wagons are unpacked, wood fetched and fires started. Since the law has permitted cabins in these woods, the familiar sound of tent peg driving, with its accompanying profanity, is no longer heard in the land. Trying to drive a white birch peg through a half-ton rock, neatly cov-



Wegner's Deer & Deer Hunting Photo Collection

The majestic STROHECKER head taken in 1898 in the High Valley section of the Seven Mountains.

ered with four inches of topsoil, is a diversion calculated to ruin anyone's disposition.

The whole group decides to go to their favorite deer stands. Then, with everything agreed, the men crawl under their blankets at 9:30, but not before putting out the lanterns and setting the alarm clock for 4:30.

As the lanterns dimmed hope bloomed eternal, despite the fact that during the first decade of the 20th century the deer population remained at an all-time low in Pennsylvania. In 1900, the state looked like one large clearcut. Deer were rare due to unregulated hunting and habitat destruction. In 1895, the Game Commission came into existence primarily to bring the deer herd back. In 1906, the PGC trapped and transported deer to Pennsylvania from Michigan, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Maine, Ohio and Kentucky.

The buck law was passed in 1907,



Wegner's Deer & Deer Hunting Photo Collection

Try to disregard the apparent unsafe gun handling practice in this photo due to its historical value. WALTER "Wawa" PEIRSON JR. poses in front of Pecks Pond in 1906.

which gave does complete protection, and 300 deer were taken that year. In 1912, Shoemaker noted that the deer kill had risen to 1,000 bucks, but he raised one serious question in 1915: "The future of the sport in Pennsylvania is uncertain. The great luck of the hunters in the banner years has multiplied their numbers. Forest fires, the inroads of civilization, dogs at large, and the freedom from predatory birds and animals to prey on weakly or diseased specimens, have all added a question mark to the continuance of the sport. But it is hoped that matters will adjust themselves, and this pastime, which has brought out the best in manhood in all ages can be ours for untold generations to come."

As O.H. fell asleep, he, too, pondered that same question. Little did he know that matters would adjust themselves as Shoemaker had hoped, and that the 1915 buck kill would rise to 1,287 bucks, with one of them being shot by O.H. himself.

When the alarm clock sputtered, O.H. and his comrades got ready for the opening day. All were in position

well before sunrise. After a fruitless day of stand hunting, the boys swapped experiences of the day's events around the campfire that night. Pop saw a doe, and Doc a flash of a "flag." Everyone agreed it was probably a buck. "All deer partially seen are bucks," Hoddy insisted. Wawa reported flushing six pheasants that seemed to know he couldn't hit them with his Winchester .30-30. Nobody got a shot. The meat pole remained barren.

The second day also passed in an uneventful way, with long cold hours, hunters huddled in such sacred places as Hemlock Swamp, Bald Hill, Grassy Swale, Hickory Crossing, Rake Run and the White Birch Opening.

On day three the bunch decided to drive Hemlock Swamp. After several drivers got lost and wandered into Wolf Swamp, the boys gathered together and decided to have lunch. After enjoying the noonday fire, they laid out a new plan. They would drive Grassy Swale. O.H. soon found his stand: a fair size rock on the side of a low ridge against which he nestled into the leaves with his Winchester .30-30 across his knees. The afternoon was clear and cold with no snow. Wolfe describes what happened in his chronicle of the Minnisink Hunting and Fishing Club. "I had been quiet for about a half hour, when I saw movement in the scrub about a hundred yards to my left. In a moment I made out the form of a deer but was uncertain as to the sex. The deer quickly removed all doubt by lowering a fine 8-point rack, and sniffing the leaves like a dog hunting a scent. However, he was in such a thick growth as to be almost invisible, and save for the instant he lowered his head, I saw no part of his body at which to aim.

"What one's heart does on such an occasion is past belief. For days you may have toiled unceasingly, fighting your way through dense swamps in the hope of driving a deer to one of your camp mates posted on the outer edge. Through miles and miles of tangled scrub oak, you have pushed,

backed, scratched and torn your painful progress to reach a favorite ridge. There you have sat and shivered the cold day through but all in vain. Now, at last, you seem about to be rewarded.

"After a momentary reflection, I concluded it would be better to try a lucky shot into the scrub where the buck was standing, than to risk his scenting me, and with one leap in the opposite direction, escape without even an opportunity given to shoot at all. So I aimed at about the height where I calculated his shoulder must be and fired. He bounded out at once, head in the air and fortunately, in my general direction. Picking an opening in the thicket ahead of him, I fired but he increased his speed without changing his direction, which brought him through an open space about 25 yards directly in front of me. The third shot brought him down in a heap, the bullet having gone through his spine."

With the sun setting and being four miles from Peck's Pond, the party split so that O.H. could return to camp for more help and lanterns. About an hour later nine willing shoulders made it to the deer to help get it out. The Minnisink deer hunting entourage arrived back at The Cabin at 9 p.m. After hanging the buck, the men sat down to a well-earned but rather late supper.

The full moon rose cold and clear that night over the black ice of Peck's Pond, and the stillness promised a bite to the air for the morning hunt. Pop left The Cabin for a glance at the thermometer — 15 degrees. "It will be zero in the morning, boys;



Wegner's Deer & Deer Hunting Photo Collection

TWO successful deer hunters at The Cabin in 1915.

let's put that big log on her tonight," he insisted.

It took two guys, Pop and Doc to bring it in, a heavy white oak log measuring 12 inches by three feet in length. They rolled it back and piled the lighter logs in front. Into the red hot coals they thrust four fat pine knots, and in a moment, the flames flared up, setting free the stored up sunshine and warmth the log had spent years in gathering for the deer camp boys. They fired their pipes, drew their chairs near to the fire and more deer hunting tales unfolded.

As the lanterns dimmed, author Wolfe penned the following lines for the 1915 Pocono deer hunt: "Back Log and Pine Knot. They light us to welcome blankets and give an inspiration to happy dreams of these, the better days of our lives." □

If you liked this account, be sure to check out the author's new book, **Legendary Deer Camps** (Krause Publications, PR02, PO Box 5009, Iola, WI 54945-5009, 1-800-258-0929, or www.krausebooks.com; 208 pp., hardbound, \$34, plus \$4 s&h, and PA residents must add state sales tax.) Featured are 11 camps: Read about Oliver Hazard Perry's 2- to 3-month exploits hunting the wilds of Ohio in the mid-1800s; George Shiras III's experiences on Michigan's Upper Peninsula; Theodore Roosevelt at his Elk Horn ranch in the Dakota Badlands; Aldo Leopold's hunts — including Wisconsin's first bow season, in 1934; and much more. Based largely on old journals and other historical accounts, **Legendary Deer Camps** capsulizes the time when our deer hunting tradition began to take root. Complete with 200 rare historical paintings and photographs, this book is a must for every deer hunting library.

A Penn's Woods SCRAPBOOK

Written and Illustrated by Bob Sopchick



THE CHRONICLE OF A hunter's days afield is at best a leather-bound journal or perhaps a photo album, but for most it's little more than a box or drawer brimming with old licenses, spent cartridge casings, frayed lanyards and orphaned gloves. Scattered among some photos are worn pocketknives, tattered maps, pins and patches, old turkey calls, and the odd tail feather.

Occasionally, I happen upon such a box at a garage sale, usually with a \$2 price sticker. These remnants are of little material value, but remain only as curious connections to outdoor experiences not unlike our own. Sifting through them is to see another hunter's autumns unfold.

We all keep a mental scrapbook of sorts, as some things cannot be glued in the pages of a book or put in a drawer. They transcend memory, becoming part of what and who we are.

Hunting is largely comprised of snippets of activity within longer expanses of solitude; of fleeting images that linger then fade, springing forth at times with remarkable clarity, sometimes years later. Following are some odds and ends, thoughts and images that stand alone in contrast to the basic law of perception that a whole is greater than the sum of its parts.



A FRIEND SHOWS ME his favorite deer stand, where for 15 years he has taken some fine bucks. He is a quiet, reserved fellow, but speaks excitedly about the deer and other wildlife he has seen here. He points out trails and the scars of buck rubs and where the bruiser buck he took last year fell. He generously offers me the stand to use during archery season, but I decline.

Some places are too personal to be shared. To my eyes, it is an ordinary bit of woods, choked with honeysuckle and bleached windfalls and locust trees. To my friend though, it is a wondrous, shimmering landscape where life and death and countless other dramas play out; a sacred place where he dreamed and wished and hoped and was skillful when he had to be. No, I cannot hunt here.

My place is a splendid landscape where I have seen every kind of light known to man, every nuance of weather imaginable. Part of me al-



ways lingers there, and only when I return there am I whole again. It is an uncivil slice of land, thick with laurel and rockslides and charred stumps; what might be an ugly place to some, but to me is the most beautiful spot I know.

Imagine your favorite deer woods. At first, you do not see deer, or yourself making a shot, but familiar trees and brush and rocks and logs, the exact gradient of the land, the precise passage of light and shadow. This is the only place you will ever stand on this earth where for one brief, immortal second, after taking a deer, you realize where you fit in within the greater context of this world.

No other being can stand there in your stead and see what you see, feel what you feel. It is not that we alone are unique, but how we are defined by the land that makes us so.

I WAS TEMPTED TO ORDER a clock with an alarm that gobbled like a wild turkey instead of an annoying electronic buzz, but thought it might be unhealthy to begin the day with a sudden surge of adrenaline that sets my heart to pounding whenever a gobbler sounds off.

If I were to select the song of a single bird to awaken to, it would be the *drink — your — teeeee, drink — your — teeeee* coaxing of the rufous-sided towhee, and since I like to start my day with a cup of Earl Gray's finest, it would be all the more appropriate.

As far as bird songs and sounds is concerned, several days ago a flicker began hammering on the rain gutter just outside my skylight. I studied this handsome fellow at close range for more than 15 minutes as the studio reverberated with his drumming, followed by loud cries of *wick wick wick wick wick*, and *flick-a flick-a flick-a*. This I think would be a great alarm for my daughter, who can repeatedly turn off a snooze alarm with the all the speed and deftness of a shell game artist.

As I write this, in June, a full moon peeks over the big pine out back. As always, I study it through powerful binoculars. This is the Strawberry Moon, a name I like and timely, as I recently watched catbirds gorging on wild strawberries.

Every hunter I've talked to who hunted the first day of spring gobbler season remarked at the special, haunting beauty of April's full moon, the Planting Moon, that illuminated the way to their calling locations.

My father and I walked far down a mountainside road under that moon. The only thing that stirred was a porcupine that scuttled across in front of us, complaining then in its odd voice when we studied him close up. Halfway down the mountain Dad said, "Think of all the times we've walked to stands together in the moonlight."

"Lots of times," I said, recalling other full moons that lit our way



across frozen swamps and rocky hillsides and along rivers. At the bottom we sat along the road for an hour, basking in the silvery silence, waiting for the first lilt of birdsong.

The moon always reminds me to take nothing for granted, to appreciate even the commonplace things, and I was thankful for this moon, too, and that we could do this one more time.

RECENTLY I WAS A PASSENGER in a luxury car. The leather seats were butter-soft, and infinitely adjustable. Both passenger and driver, although sitting side by side, had their own climate controlled temperature zones. Special air filtration eliminated air particulates. It was very quiet and the ride was smooth, even though the road was rough. A nice set of wheels, indeed.

As we rode along I thought how we have become obsessed with seeking absolute comfort. I know some folks who could not possibly bear a single warm day without air conditioning, and voice their displeasure when exposed to the sweet, humid air of summer for even a few minutes. Likewise in winter, they cannot tolerate even the slightest chill.

After perusing the pages of a fall hunting catalog, I thought how it is now possible that a hunter wearing ultra-modern layering systems, specialized boots and socks, high-tech gloves, a thermal facemask, and a multi-functional hat, is almost impervious to the elements. No one likes to be wet and cold, but the ad copy promoted the concept that anything less than total comfort detracts from a satisfying outdoor experience. Goodness, if my nose runs, must I go home?

A truly liberating experience during the deer season is to leave the high-tech stuff at home for a day. Wear a wool shirt-jac, wool pants, lace up a pair of comfortable, uninsulated boots with some decent socks (do you really need 1,000 grams of insulation to walk around?) and slip on a pair of thin leather shooting gloves. Carry an old rifle you haven't hunted with in a long while — better yet if it has iron sights — and head out into the thick stuff for a day of stillhunting.

Occasionally, during archery season, I wear a pair of olive-green moleskin breeches (those old-fashioned pants that button at the knee), a long pair of over the knee wool stockings, a plaid shirt, a vest and a drivers cap. I carry everything I need in a small possibles bag. I drift through the uplands in comfort and with ease, and the deer really don't care if I'm not wearing any camouflage.

In gaining things we often lose other, valuable things. If a hunter is totally insulated from the elements, if he doesn't feel the pinch of thorns or the texture of the log he sits upon, if the wind and snow and temperature are no longer part of the equation, then we have lost much. There should be a distinction between being outdoors and riding in the aforementioned luxury car, and I think there's a difference between a hunter and a self-contained shooting station.

FOUR OF US WALK single file on a grassy right-of-way that slices across a flooded swamp. I am third in line, and the first two turkey hunters pass within two feet of a



fawn curled up in the grass. I point out the fawn and we study it for a few moments, then so as not to disturb it, we quickly move on.

Once again I am amazed by the power of instinct. The fawn lay there, motionless, with four hulking figures so near. Instinct welds the fawn to the ground, its chances of survival greater than trying to escape. In a few weeks, though, that will change when it learns what danger is and can bolt for cover. I imagined how as an adult this little buck might be saved by that same inherent discipline.

It is a frosty winter morning in the swampy bottomland, and the mature buck is bedded near a windfall, watching a hunter approach. Every fiber of the deer's being is focused on the hunter. Eyes, ears and keen nose measure, weigh and analyze the impetus of its foe. The buck has the option to run, sneak away, or stay hidden.

The buck holds tight, as it had in the grassy right-of-way years before. The hunter passes slowly by, stopping to glass the thicket ahead. It is a tense moment, the buck's muscles are bunched like steel springs. Seeing nothing, the hunter continues on.

Through a combination of instinct, intellect and habit the deer survives another day. Coupled with their remarkable physical attributes, it is no wonder that many hail the whitetail as the greatest game animal on earth.

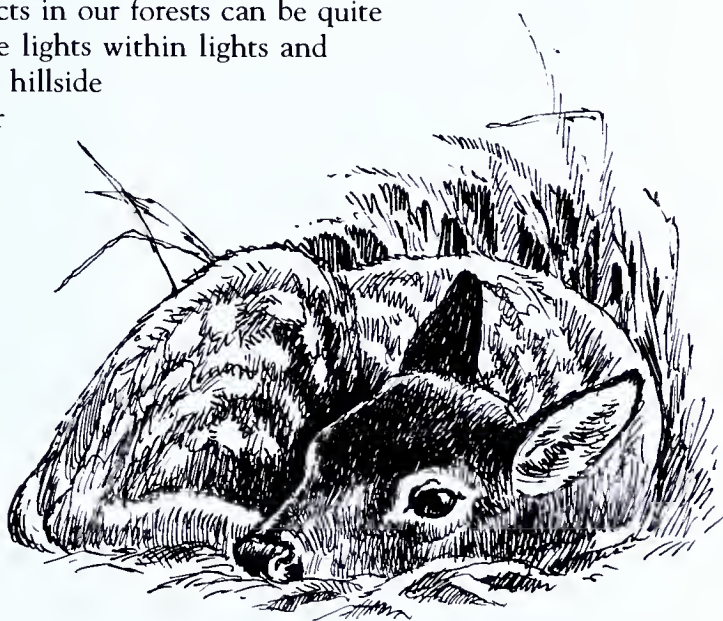
I believe hunters would have a greater, and possibly a more successful experience if they rediscovered their own instinctive nature, relying more on intuitive notions and less on old habits. Before unleashing the feral hunter within though, it may be a moot point if at the same time we don't develop our physical prowess. It's summer as you read this — start walking a half hour every day for the next two months.

WHEN STUDYING PAINTINGS, viewers often ask if the setting is early morning or late afternoon, or possibly either. I often think about this when I'm looking up at the first bars of sunlight striping the canopy, and late in the day as light slides up the trunks.

Usually, but not always, morning light on the trees appears more pink or yellow than the light of late afternoon, which tends to be orange ranging to red as the sun sinks.

Our deciduous forests flow over mostly hilly terrain, and because of this, the lighting effects in our forests can be quite dramatic. Oftentimes there are lights within lights and shadows within shadows. One hillside may glow fiercely while another is plummeted in violet shadow. As the sun rises or descends, the sunlight streams in here and there at sharp angles, like theater spotlights.

It is on this glorious stage that hunter and hunted assume their roles, both scripted and unscripted; a spotlight for every player, each and every thing a lead character. There are no small parts here.



1,029,350: The largest antlerless deer license allocation in state history . . .

Here's Why

By Bret D. Wallingford

PGC Wildlife Biologist

IN APRIL 2002, deer management staff recommended, and the Board of Game Commissioners approved, an antlerless allocation of 1,029,350 for the 2002-03 season. This is the largest antlerless license allocation ever issued in Pennsylvania. It's comprised of 106,750 licenses for the special regulations counties, and 922,600 for the remaining 61 counties. Several factors contributed to the size of this allocation, which was designed to complement our changing deer management program. In this article I will explain the basis for this allocation and how it fits in with our deer management program. To do so will require an explanation of changes to deer management during the 2000-01 and 2001-02 hunting seasons.

In the initial meetings after the Deer Management Section was formed in September 1999 we identified some major issues that needed to be addressed. The top priority was getting the deer population under control and then bringing it in line with what the habitat can sustain. Selling this to hunters and others interested in deer has been a demanding yet essential task.

The need for getting control of our deer population is evident in much of the forested land across Pennsylvania. Deer are considered a "keystone species," one that can have a profound

impact on vegetation, altering species composition to the point that entire forests either fail to regenerate, or regenerate with tree species that are not beneficial for deer or other species of wildlife, or for lumber. Sure, other factors such as gypsy moth caterpillars and acid rain affect regeneration. But exclosures across the state have demonstrated to us that deer are a major influence on forest regeneration.



JOHN DZEMYAN, a Land Manager in the Northcentral Region, shows how the forest thrives within a deer exclosure. Reducing the number of deer will go a long ways towards allowing our forests to regenerate.

The first changes to deer management in 2000 included the October flintlock season, an opening day of antlerless deer season concurrent with the last Saturday of the antlered deer season and, most importantly, an antlerless allocation designed to stabilize the deer population in every county. The population analyses we conducted after the 2000-01 season indicated that these changes did, indeed, stabilize the deer population, ending two consecutive years of growth.

For the 2001-02 season, more changes were made. The fall flintlock season was expanded from three to seven days, and during the last three days of this season, junior and senior license holders were permitted to hunt antlerless deer with modern firearms. This marked the first time hunters with modern firearms were offered an October season for deer. The big change, however, was the 12-day antlerless deer season held concurrent with the antlered deer season.

With those new seasons in place, we felt we could begin addressing our second major priority: the extremely high mortality rate of bucks. We wanted to initiate a regulation that would allow 50 to 75 percent of yearling bucks to survive to their second year. Our data on antler points and age indicated that an antler restriction that limited the harvest to bucks with three or more points on one side would be needed in most of the state. In some western counties, where yearling bucks grow larger antlers, an antler restriction of four or more points on one side would be needed to accomplish this objective.

The new antler restrictions approved in April by the Board of Game Commissioners changed the definition of a legal antlered deer for the 2002-03 hunting season. In the counties of Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Crawford, Erie, Indiana, Lawrence, Mercer, Washington and Westmoreland, a legal buck would be a deer with four or more points on one antler. In the remain-



SHAWN GOWIN of LeRoy proudly shows off his first deer. This year's antlerless allocation is the largest ever in Pennsylvania, and is designed to complement the new antler restrictions.

der of the state, a legal buck would be a deer with three or more points on one antler. The only exceptions to the new antler restriction regulations are Special Regulation Area counties, and for junior license holders, disabled hunters with a permit to use a vehicle, and active duty U.S. Armed Services personnel. These license holders will be able to abide by the previous antler restriction.

Based on our data, we expect the new antler restriction regulations will allow approximately 85,000 antlered bucks to survive the hunting season and, in turn, become part of the 2003 overwintering population.

From an overall deer management standpoint, those 85,000 "extra" bucks are counterproductive to our goal of balancing deer populations with their habitat. Instead, by the end of the hunting seasons in January 2003, we want to have about the same or slightly fewer deer than we did in January 2002. Therefore, to keep the population stable and at the same time allow more bucks in the overwintering population, we need hunters to re-

move an additional antlerless deer for every buck we allow to survive due to antler restrictions.

It's this need to remove these additional antlerless deer that called for this year's high antlerless allocations.

We do not expect allocations to remain at this level. This year we expect a relatively low antlered deer harvest. After this year, though, we expect the buck kill to be back up around where it has been — but it will be comprised of older deer.

However, there are several factors that will be changing simultaneously. Some of the bucks that survive hunting season will die from vehicle collisions, diseases, predation and other factors. Survival rates of bucks will play a more important role in next year's harvest than they have in the past. With a buck population comprised of a larger percentage of two-year-olds, hunters should expect them to be more difficult to hunt than they were as yearlings.

Other factors will have direct impacts on antlerless allocations because they influence success rates. After the 2002-03 deer season, most Pennsylvania hunters will have experienced only two years of concurrent antlered and antlerless deer seasons, along with the early antlerless. We expect many hunters to change when and where they hunt antlerless deer, but just what these changes might be can't be predicted.

The timing of the antlerless harvest will be especially critical during the concurrent firearms season. If more hunters decide to harvest antlerless deer early, success rates will increase. Conversely, if hunters decide to wait for a legal buck before harvesting an antlerless deer, success rates will decrease. As managers, we do not know how Pennsylvania deer hunters will react to these new options.

Weather is another factor that can influence success rates. When compared to the 3-day antlerless season, the 12-day concurrent season greatly reduces the impacts of weather. However, we currently have only one year of data with concurrent seasons, and the 2001-02 season was unusually warm. It will take a few more years before we can fully evaluate this new season structure.

We will be monitoring when antlered and antlerless deer harvests take place, and how new regulations affect the harvest. We will be looking at long-term effects of weather, especially during the firearms season. Predicting antlerless allocations during deer management changes is difficult, but if the program continues as planned, allocations should be reduced in the following years.

Deer management is changing in Pennsylvania. The antlerless allocation changes are made to allow progress in our program. This year's record allocation is but the latest example.

Keep in mind, however, that the deer herd is monitored closely year to year. Deer populations change in composition and abundance because of management decisions we make and because of natural fluctuation in their survival and recruitment rates.

The antlerless allocations are a tool to balance deer with habitat, which is a primary goal for deer managers and hunters interested in sustaining the future of deer and deer hunting. Hunters always play a critical role in deer management, and hunting and hunters have never been scrutinized as closely by society as they are right now.

We believe our deer management program is defensible biologically and socially, and puts deer hunters in a position to perform an ecological function that benefits everyone in society. We hope Pennsylvania deer hunters embrace the new challenges and changes of deer management in the 21st century. □



FIELD NOTES



Exclamation Point

SULLIVAN — Deputies Frank Miller, Corey Richmond and I were patrolling on SGL 13 when I commented, "This looks like a good place to hunt..." — but before I could finish, a gobbler ran in front of the truck — "turkey!" Corey said.

— WCO WILLIAM M. WILLIAMS, MUNCY VALLEY

Predator Now the Prey

WYOMING — DCNR forester Jim Kessler came across a 6-foot black snake wrapped around a great horned owl. Apparently, the owl didn't realize what it was hearing or had seen only a small portion of the reptile moving on the forest floor, and once it sank its talons into the snake, the tables were turned.

— WCO WILLIAM WASSERMAN, TUNKHANNOCK

Despicable

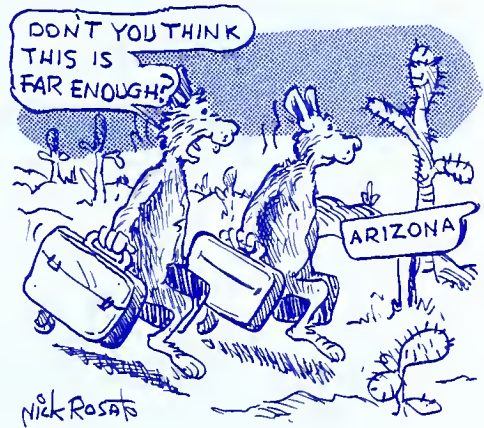
MONROE — I cited an individual for shooting a deer out of season, and although several of the 12 rounds he expended hit the deer, some ended up in trees at a nearby busy golf course. His recklessness did not end there. Upon confiscating his rifle, I discovered that it had a round in the chamber and the safety was off. We can only hope that the stiff fines and license revocation will deter this individual from any more such foolishness.

— WCO PETER F. SUSSENBACH, BLAKESLEE

Doesn't Happen Every Day

LUZERNE — WCO Tom Swiech and I were leaving the courthouse one afternoon when we spotted an adult male peregrine falcon perched on a tree at the edge of the parking lot.

— WCO DAVID P. ALLEN, MOUNTAINTOP



Uprooted

One day this past spring nearly seven inches of rain fell in the Bear Creek area of the Pocono Plateau. Historical buildings, homes and automobiles were damaged, and several roads and bridges were washed out. Some of the damage occurred on SGL 91 and, for several days after the flood, I noticed many animals wandering around, looking for drier ground.

— WES JOSEPH WENZEL, NORTHEAST REGION OFFICE, DALLAS

Wild Goose Chase

CLARION — Jeff Hale told me that one of his calves had gotten separated one evening just as it was getting dark, so he headed out to find it. Jeff spotted the brown and white calf in the fading light, but it ran when it saw him. Every time Jeff closed in on the calf it would outrun him, and he couldn't believe a calf so young had such endurance. Thinking that he'd take up the search the next morning, Jeff returned home only to find the calf reunited with its mother. Now, Jeff believes in staying fit, but he doesn't advocate chasing deer for exercise.

— WCO ALAN C. SCOTT, NEW BETHLEHEM

Makes You Wonder

BUTLER — Neighbors reported an individual who shot a deer in his backyard in March, and when Deputy Francis Bodema and WCO Brunst went to his house he said, "I did it. I did it." When asked why, the man said that he didn't get a deer in deer season and didn't think killing one out of season would be a problem because there are so many.

— WCO MARIO L. PICCIRILLI, RENFREW



Tough Old Bird

HUNTINGDON — A spring turkey hunter told me he had his decoy out and was calling when he heard something approaching. Expecting to see a gobbler appear, imagine his surprise when a bear grabbed the decoy, took a bite out of it, dropped it and stepped back, and then bit it again before ambling off.

— WCO ROBERT A. EINODSHOFER, HUNTINGDON

A Real Buzzsaw

SUSQUEHANNA — Don Kannenberg showed me a photo of a grouse standing on his chainsaw. Apparently the bird didn't appreciate the noise Don was making, so while he was stacking wood, the bird jumped up on the saw. After a few awkward moments Don was back in business, while the grouse looked on from a short distance away.

— WCO JAMES P. MCCARTHY, HALLSTEAD

Perfectly All Right

CRAWFORD — I was handing out our Game Commission coloring book to some preschoolers, when a little girl raised her hand and asked, "Mister, is it all right if we color outside of the lines; we're pretty little, you know?"

— WCO DAVID L. MYERS, LINESVILLE

Mascot?

VENANGO — I was driving by Franklin High School when I noticed a black squirrel with a red tail. I couldn't tell if it was a black or fox squirrel, but it did have the right color combination. The Franklin High School Knight's team colors are red and black.

— I&E SUPERVISOR REGIS F. SENKO, NORTHWEST REGION OFFICE

God's Country

POTTER — Just after I transferred here, neighboring WCO Bill Ragosta and I located a small group of elk in my new district. We also saw deer and turkeys feeding within 50 yards of the elk. Now I know how this area got its nickname.

— WCO MARK S. FAIR, ULYSSES

Bad Hair Day

FOREST — I had to stop for seven deer in the road, and when they scattered, six ran to the left and the other to the right. A few seconds later, the lone deer came running back across the road. Unfortunately, one of the other deer had decided to join the lone one, and they collided in the middle of the road. They both fell backward, stood up, shook themselves off, and then looked back at me and then at each other before running off. On my way back I noticed another group of deer trying to cross the road. I don't know if they were the same deer, but one of these ran into a sapling and fell backwards.

— DEPUTY CHARLES E. WORLEY, SR., TIONESTA

Gottchal!

JEFFERSON — A turkey hunter told me that after an extended period of calling, he gave in to the need to answer nature's call. As luck would have it, a mature gobbler came strutting at just that moment. I couldn't help but ask if the gobbler's head was red with excitement, or if the bird was just embarrassed.

— WCO ROGER A. HARTLESS, BROOKVILLE

Couldn't Top That

SOMERSET — Steve Leiendecker, my new neighboring WCO, recently transferred to the Southwest Region, and he asked for some instruction on the new darting equipment he was issued here. We set up a target on a box on SGL 111, and I demonstrated how to assemble, load and fire a dart. It seems my dart went through the box, flew off course and went through a bag of donuts. Steve hit the target on his first shot.

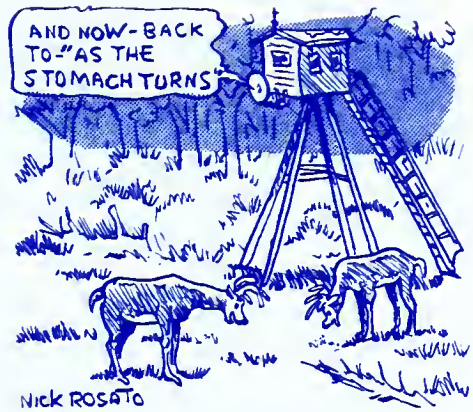
— WCO BRIAN E. WITHERITE, MEYERSDALE



Don't See Everyday

We had some heavy frosts here late into the spring, and on one morning Jack and Mary Faulconbridge noticed a hummingbird perched on a limb near their feeder. Knowing it's unusual to see a hummingbird sit still that long, they investigated and discovered that the bird had frozen to death.

— LMO JAMES E. DENIKER, SANDY LAKE



Seen It All

CRAWFORD — During spring gobbler season I came across a most elaborate treestand. It had several windows, metal steps with a handrail, and mounted in the front was a satellite TV dish. I chuckled, wondering how many deer were actually taken by the hunter who uses the stand.

— WCO MARK A. ALLEGRO, MEADVILLE

High and Dry

BEAVER — When I received a call about a great blue heron caught in some string, I assumed it was tangled in some fishing line on the ground. You can imagine my surprise, however, when I found the bird tangled in kite string 30 feet in the air, over Connoquenessing Creek. Thanks to Dennis Halis and John Kurta, who loaned me a canoe, a fishing rod with a wooden bobber, and some suggestions, I was able to free the bird, and stay relatively dry, too.

— WCO TRAVIS ANDERSON, ALIQUIPPA

It Figures

FOREST — After walking for miles one morning in search of a spring gobbler, I returned home with an unfilled tag, only to find a note from my wife reminding me to ask her what she had seen in the driveway that morning. I knew what the answer was, but had to ask anyway. I don't think I need to tell you, though.

— WCO DANIEL P. SCHMIDT, WEST HICKORY

Tough Month

PERRY — In May, two ospreys were shot and killed here, three young bald eagles were found dead in a nest (unknown cause of death at this time), and I responded to a call about an injured mature bald eagle along Shermans Creek.

— WCO STEVE HOWER, MILLERSTOWN

Buckled Over

CENTRE — Just a reminder to my new neighboring officer Kris Krebbs — make sure the bear is asleep before grabbing it by the leg and pulling it out of a culvert trap. I can take the excitement, but the laughing hurts too much.

— WCO ERIC L. SETH, SNOWSHOE

Good Guess

LYCOMING — When asked what a group of nesting herons is called, one team of students at the county envirothon came up with Heronville. The correct answer is a rookery.

— WCO RICHARD E. MACKLEM, JERSEY SHORE



Looked Too Real

SUSQUEHANNA — We always encourage people to take down birdfeeders in the spring, to avoid problems with bears, but Montrose resident Mary Jo Carlton experienced a new problem. It seems a bear found her wreath with artificial blueberries on her door too attractive to resist.

— WCO CHARLES J. ARCOVITCH, UNIONDALE

Habitat

POTTER — Many landowners don't appreciate the importance of leaving dead snags. I have several old apple trees on my property, and this year alone, the cavities in the trees have hosted broods of mergansers, bluebirds, kestrels and starlings.

— WCO WILLIAM C. RAGOSTA, COUDERSPORT

No Rest

GREENE — My Field Note in June was about a ring-necked pheasant that wore out its welcome by crowing on my deck early each morning. Not long after, a male cardinal that fought his reflection in our patio door, and a bluebird that attacked his rival in a bay window, joined the loud-mouthed rooster in making sure we didn't sleep in. Early morning at my house is like a scene from Alfred Hitchcock's thriller "The Birds."

— WCO ROD BURNS, WAYNESBURG

Firsthand

I had gotten my brother-in-law, who lives in California, a subscription to *Game News*, and it made him want to visit me and experience some of things he had been reading about in the magazine. One day he got to watch us work on a bear in a culvert trap and remove some nuisance beavers. He enjoyed his experience thoroughly, and mentioned that I was like a paid Boy Scout.

— WCO ROBERT F. MINNICH, MANSFIELD

Get a Grip

UNION — WCOs occasionally team up with State Police pilots and use helicopters for law enforcement work. Not being accustomed to flying, I usually get a little nervous when airborne. On one such trip I was in the rear seat, and I thought I was hiding my anxiety pretty well until the pilot told me not to grip the tubular supports so tightly, as they are designed to break away.

— WCO BERNARD J. SCHMADER, MILLMONT

Never Learn

WESTMORELAND — Deputy Leonard Grebeck observed a spring turkey hunter without blaze orange, stalking another hunter who was calling and had decoys set out in a field. While Lenny was taking the necessary information from the individual to file a citation, he was explaining the risk involved when the hunter cut him short and said, "Yea, I should know better; several years ago I was shot in mistake for a turkey."

— WCO GARY TOWARD, HYDE PARK

Two Different Views

McKEAN — Deputy Gordon Liezert and I spotted a coyote with a large groundhog in its mouth, and when it saw us, it dropped the chuck and ran. The lucky groundhog also ran as soon as it hit the ground. We chuckled, thinking about how much the groundhog must appreciate us, but at the same time about the coyote wishing we would mind our own business.

— WCO THOMAS M. SABOLCIK, PORT ALLEGANY

Treadin' Lightly

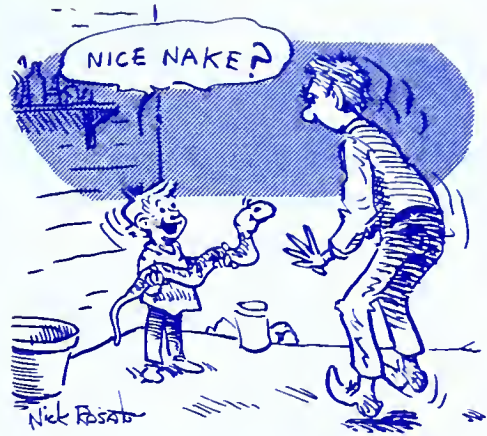
CAMERON — I watched a red squirrel feeding on a roadkilled porcupine. The quills failed to deter the squirrel, although it did seem to be cautious.

— WCO CLINT J. DENIKER, EMPORIUM

You Never Know

FAYETTE — Every Saturday morning during the spring gobbler season I would pick up Deputy Brian Miller at dawn to head out on patrol, and without exception, I could count on a mature tom to be strutting in his yard, gobbling up a storm. Either the gobbler felt safe near a "game warden's" home, or maybe he just wanted to make sure Brian was up so he could get out there and look after his feathered pals.

— WCO STEPHEN A. LEIENDECKER, FAIRCHANCE



Chip Off the Old Block

MONTGOMERY — My 2-year-old son Michael was crouched in a corner of the garage when I heard him saying, "Hi, nake, hi, nake." I quickly realized he had hold of the tail end of a large milk snake, which was halfway into a large crack in the foundation. Before I could get to him he had the snake out of the hole, and fearing he would be bitten, I was quite surprised when Mikey carried the snake outside and released it into better habitat. As the snake slithered away, Mikey waved goodbye saying, "Bye, bye, nake."

— WCO J. CHRISTOPHER HEIL, COLLEGEVILLE

Welcome

The Southwest Region Office has been moved to the former Fairfield Elementary School along Route 711 between Ligonier and New Florence. We held an open house in May, but if you missed it, you're still welcome to stop by and see our new facility. Three crews from the PA Conservation Corps, (a job training program for people 18 to 25) did the renovations. I'm sure you'll be impressed by the work done by these young folks under the leadership of Bob Livingston, Mike Bridge and Bill McCombie.

— IES MEL SCHAKE, SOUTHWEST REGION OFFICE

Special conservation projects approved

AT THE JUNE meeting the Board of Game Commissioners unanimously approved allocating the remaining federal Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program funds to help finance development of a new "Breeding Bird Atlas" for Pennsylvania and the acquisition of critical habitat for Indiana bats, a federal endangered species, in Blair County.

In 2001, the state received \$1.5 million in federal WCRP funding as part of a national effort to fund management of "species of the greatest conservation concern." The Game Commission and Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission were designated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to approve projects within the commonwealth that meet the program's criteria.

Earlier, the two agencies announced that 14 projects would receive more than \$1.3 million in WCRP funds. (See last month's issue.) The Breeding Bird Atlas and Indiana bat habitat initiatives are the final projects to receive funding from the

initial WCRP monies.

Pennsylvania is scheduled to receive \$2.5 million in federal State Wildlife Grant Program funding for high-priority fish and wildlife conservation projects across Pennsylvania in 2002. (For more details, see News Release 37-02.)

Pennsylvania's first Breeding Bird Atlas was developed in the 1980s, and the state's birding community has endorsed the initiation of a second state bird atlas, which will utilize birding enthusiasts to cover every corner of the state in a search for the myriad breeding birds that nest here. Field work for the project will begin by January 2004. A total of \$100,000 was needed for the atlas' planning phase, which will be developed through the Penn State Cooperative Wetlands Center. A funding breakdown is as follows: WCRP, \$75,000; Game Commission, \$10,000; and Wild Resource Conservation Fund, \$15,000.

Acquisition of the 2.4-acre Denver Traxler property, adjacent to the

The Board of Game Commissioners scheduled a meeting for July 28 to vote on several items proposed at the April meeting, but not published in the "Pennsylvania Bulletin" in time for the required public comment period. These proposals include the use of any muzzleloading long gun in the October muzzleloader antlerless deer season; the use of crossbows during all firearms seasons for deer, bear and elk, as well as in special regulations areas during archery seasons; unsold antlerless deer licenses to be used on private lands only, or public lands with an approved deer management plan; and clarify the definition of "accompanying a junior hunter." Check the Game Commission website, www.pgc.state.pa.us, and watch for updates in next month's *Game News*.

Canoe Creek church, which houses the state's largest bat maternity colony, including Indiana bats, will strengthen the state's ability to safeguard this important structure. The Western Pennsylvania Conservancy will secure the property from the Traxler family, which will be deeded

to Canoe Creek State Park for maintenance and management in collaboration with the Game Commission. A total of \$109,613 was needed to acquire the Traxler property. A funding breakdown is as follows: WCRP, \$82,209; and \$27,404 from the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy.

More than 260 acres to SGL network

THE BOARD of Game Commissioners at its June meeting approved three items that will result in a gain of more than 260 acres for the state game lands network.

The largest acquisition approved was the purchase of 254 acres in Fawn Township, York County, from the Farm & Natural Land Trust of York County for \$101,600 — \$400 per acre. The tract will be designated State Game Land 327. Comprised mainly of forested habitat, this parcel will ensure public access to about a one-mile stretch of Muddy Creek.

Also in York County, the Board approved a land exchange with Ski Roundtop Operating Corporation involving a license for an underground water line to convey water to ponds at Ski Roundtop along a boundary of

SGL 242 in Warrington Township. There are no surface or forest damages related to the license on this 3-acre strip, nor will hunting and trapping be affected. As a prepaid license fee for 10 years (at a rate of \$600 per year), Ski Roundtop will convey a 15-acre tract to the Game Commission. The tract is comprised of wetlands and is adjacent to SGL 242, which currently contains 1,516 acres.

To improve public access to SGL 71 in Huntingdon County, the Board approved a land exchange with Anthony and Alison Alesi. In exchange for one acre of SGL 71, the Alesi's will convey to the agency a 1.6-acre parcel of land also in Union Township. The parcel includes a public access road. By approving the exchange, the Board has eliminated the



WCO FRANK DOOLEY, Wayne County, was honored with the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' "Conservation Law Enforcement Award." Dooley began his Game Commission career as a deputy in 1977. He entered the Ross Leffler School of Conservation in 1991 and graduated as a member of the 21st class. He has been working in Wayne County as a wildlife conservation officer since 1992. In addition to being an outstanding law enforcement officer, WCO Dooley developed a program called "A Night With the Game Commission," that he uses to introduce the public to the many facets of the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

need to build a new access road. SGL 71 currently contains 4,122 acres.

Including these recent actions, the Board has approved the acquisition of about 42,250 acres of state game lands since July 1, 1999, when the last license fee increase went into effect.

In other action, the Board:

- Gave preliminary approval to a packet of regulatory changes that will limit elk hunters to hunting elk in the management area and for the sex designated on their elk license.

This proposal must be approved at a subsequent Board meeting before

taking effect.

- Authorized the removal of "propagation area" status for 90 acres of a shallow-water impoundment and swamp on SGL 277 in Crawford County.

The move is being made to increase recreational opportunities, as well as eliminate protection for nuisance Canada geese that currently take sanctuary within the propagation area. Public access to the tract will be restricted from April 1 to June 15 to protect breeding mallard ducks that utilize the area.

Hayden honored posthumously

TO HONOR former PGC biologist Arnie Hayden, the Tioga County Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation has been renamed the Arnie Hayden Memorial Chapter.

Hired as a PGC biologist in 1961, Hayden was actively involved in the reestablishment of wild turkeys in the commonwealth, particularly with the trap-and transfer of wild birds, and the

use of radio telemetry equipment to track them.

In addition to renaming the chapter after Hayden, the members have also established a \$1,000 scholarship in his name for a Tioga County senior entering the field of conservation. Arnie, a resident of Wellsboro, retired from the PGC in 1995 and died last August.

Hunters/trappers reminded to carry ID

FOLLOWING a Commonwealth Court ruling issued on May 24, Pennsylvania Game Commission Executive Director Vern Ross reminded hunters and trappers that they must carry some form of positive identification, such as a driver's license, with them to present to a wildlife conservation officer in the field.

Stemming from a 1999 case (Commonwealth v. Ickes), Commonwealth Court concluded that Section 904 of the Game and Wildlife Code (Title

34) was unconstitutional. Section 904 stated: "When an officer is in the performance of any duty required by this title, it is unlawful for any person to resist or interfere in any manner or to any degree or refuse to produce identification upon request of the officer."

However, as Ross noted, Section 904 is only one part of Title 34 requiring Pennsylvanians to produce proper identification. "Hunting and furtaking are regulated activities, which require participants to obtain

the appropriate license from the Game Commission or one of its issuing agents," Ross said. "Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for some to attempt to illegally share a license, or for nonresidents to attempt to purchase a resident license.

"So, part of our officers' responsibilities is to make sure hunters and trappers possess valid licenses, and to do so officers must have the ability to be able to check both the hunting or furtaking license and compare that to

other forms of identification the individual has on hand."

Specifically, Ross pointed to Title 34, Section 2711 (a) 12, which states that it is "unlawful for any person to, while exercising any of the privileges granted by any license provided for in this title, refuse or fail to satisfactorily provide positive identification to any landowner upon whose land that person may be occupying or to any officer whose duty it is to enforce this title."

Middle Creek Art Show & K-9 program

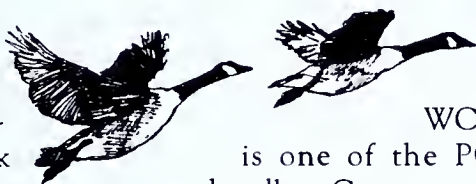
AN ART SHOW and a demonstration of the Game Commission's new K-9 program highlight this month's activities at Middle Creek.

August 2, 3 & 4 brings the Middle Creek Wildlife Art Show. This, the 17th Annual Wildlife Art Show, will showcase the works of more than 30 of Pennsylvania's finest wildlife artists, including many whose artwork graces the pages of *Game News*.

Enjoy some beautiful wildlife art, meet the artists who create it, and perhaps pick up some things for yourself and gifts, too, all in the tranquil setting around Middle Creek. Hours are Fri. Aug. 2, 1 p.m. - 6 p.m., Sat.

Aug. 3, 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.; and Sun. Aug. 4, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

August 21 & 22. You read about them in last month's *Game News*. This month go and actually see what the Game Commission's highly trained dogs have to offer wildlife law enforcement.



Lancaster
County

WCO Linda Swank

is one of the PGC's two dog handlers. Come out and meet her and her canine partner, "Onyx", a black Labrador retriever, and Rich Palmer, PGC training specialist and K-9 program director.

The Middle Creek visitors center is south of Kleinfeltersville, Lebanon County.

CONTACTING THE REGION OFFICES

Northwest — 877-877-0299
Southwest — 877-877-7137
Northcentral — 877-877-7674

Southcentral — 877-877-9107
Northeast — 877-877-9357
Southeast — 877-877-9470

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of endangered species or multiple big game animals. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.

Antlerless deer/elk/bobcat application deadlines

ANTLERLESS DEER: County treasurers will begin accepting antlerless deer license applications through the mail from Pennsylvania residents beginning Monday, August 5. Nonresidents may apply through the mail starting Monday, August 19.

For the first round of applications for "unsold antlerless deer licenses," county treasurers will begin accepting applications from residents and nonresidents by mail on Monday, August 26. For the second round, applications will be accepted beginning Monday, September 9. Check the Game Commission's website, www.pgc.state.pa.us, or watch local news media for county availability of licenses.

Over-the-counter-sales will begin in Special Regulations Area counties on Monday, August 26; in all other counties, where they're still available, on Monday, November 4.

ELK: The Game Commission has begun accepting applications for the 70 licenses to be issued this year. Applications are available from "The Outdoor Shop," posted on the agency's website. Applicants may complete and submit the form on-line. Those who wish to apply by mail may print the application from the website or use the form in the *2002-03 Pennsylvania Digest of Hunting and Trapping Regulations*.

A \$10 nonrefundable fee must be submitted with the application. Forms submitted through the mail must be accompanied by a check or money order (do not send cash) made payable to "Pennsylvania Game Commission," and must be received in the Game Commission's post office box by August 23. On-line applications must be accompanied by a credit card payment (VISA, MasterCard, Discover and American Express accepted), and will be accepted through September 13. No Game Commission office will accept hand-delivered applications.

BOBCAT: For 2002-03, the Game Commission will issue 545 bobcat permits, which will be selected at a public drawing at the Harrisburg headquarters on September 13.

Applications, along with a nonrefundable \$5 fee, are being accepted now, and must be postmarked no later than August 16. Mail-in applications are included in the 2002-03 Digest. Applications may also be made through "The Outdoor Shop." Visit the site for details and deadlines.

The bobcat hunting season is Oct. 13 - Feb. 23; the trapping season, Oct. 14 - Feb. 23. Like last year, bobcats may be taken only in Furbearer Management Zones 2 and 3. Those who received a bobcat permit last year are not eligible for this year's drawing. Pennsylvania residents only.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.



Off the Wire

by Bob D'Angelo

Arizona

A New Jersey hunter purchased the right to be the first person to hunt a Gould's turkey in the U.S. in more than 60 years after offering the winning bid at the Grand National Auction held at the National Wild Turkey Federation convention. The tag went for the high bid of \$17,500, and the money goes to the Arizona State Wild Turkey Super Fund for Gould's restoration. Until last spring, sportsmen looking to hunt a Gould's turkey had to travel to Mexico, but transplant and conservation efforts have led the Arizona Game and Fish Department to allow two gobblers to be harvested in the Huachuca Mountains in the southeastern part of the state. One tag was auctioned and the other was made available through a public drawing.

Missouri

Hunters harvested a record 257,910 deer during the 2001-02 season. Of these, 6,277 were taken by youngsters in the first-ever Youth Deer Hunt; archers tagged 21,767 deer; muzzleloader hunters, 8,662; and regular season firearm hunters, 221,204.

Arkansas

There were 28 hunting incidents, including four fatalities, reported during the 2001-02 season — down from 35 the previous year. Nearly half of the incidents last year involved falls from treestands.

Vermont

Hunters who had permits harvested 154 moose last fall — a 67 percent success rate and the highest since a 78 percent rate was recorded in 1996. The moose population has grown to an estimated 3,000 to 4,000 animals.

Nebraska

There were 12 hunting incidents and no fatalities reported last year — the first time since 1997 that no fatalities occurred.

New Hampshire

A record 527 bears were taken by hunters in 2001, surpassing the previous record of 499 set in 1999.

Virginia

Hunters took 214,583 deer during the 2001 season — a 14 percent increase from the 187,878 taken in 2000. Archers harvested 18,191 deer last year; muzzleloader hunters, 53,525; and regular firearms season hunters, 142,867. Loudoun County was tops in the state with 6,820 deer.

Wisconsin

Officials were shocked that chronic wasting disease (CWD) was found in three wild white-tailed bucks killed by hunters last fall. Until this discovery, CWD was primarily considered a problem for wild cervids in the Colorado/Wyoming/Nebraska region, some 900 miles west.

Another View

By Linda Steiner

The Steiners are changing from civilized to uncivilized, from human-usable to wildlife-welcoming, a new property.

Unbuild It and They Will Come

AT THE BEGINNING of last year, after purchasing our neighbor's property, my husband and I toured the deteriorating house and surrounding acre we had just bought.

"Nothing much here worth salvaging," I said, as we noted the sagging roof, falling down chimney and rotting timbers. My husband agreed. Tearing down the building was right in line with our plans for the new property.

With proper permits in place, on a cold sunny day in February, we watched the old house come down. The Grade-All smashed in the dilapidated roof first. Boards splintered and snapped, the dry wood no match for motor, metal and machinery. The crumbling brick chimney tumbled into the pile

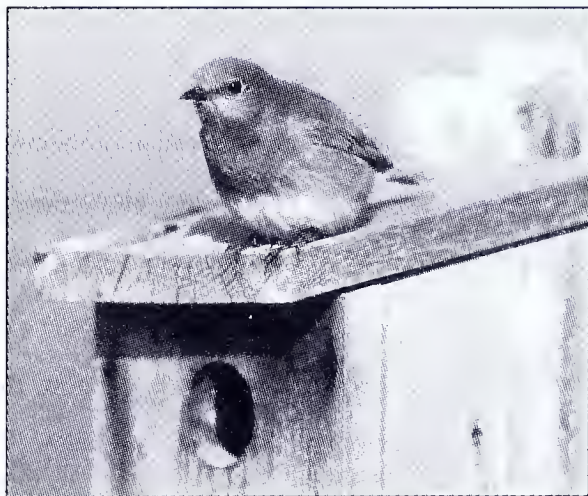
of rubble the house was fast becoming. The glass back doors were the last to go, a final splash of shards.

The machine flattened the building's remains and backed up. The operator lowered the blade and methodically pushed dirt over the debris. The house was gone, but we had engaged the heavy equipment for the day. We had the operator further "remodel" the property in a way I suppose he rarely has been asked to. Instead of directing him to smooth the yard, my husband showed the operator where to dig and scoop and push the ground into lumps and uneven depressions. Inside the cab, the operator was probably shaking his head in disbelief.

For several days afterward, people asked us what we were going to do there. To most eyes, the site looked to be under construction. Instead, the destruction was the finished product, or almost. The ground was now as we wanted it to be, just lacking some finishing touches that we would do ourselves.

Our undoing of the property was for a purpose. The curving sluiceway and shallow depression that had taken the place of the driveway and smooth lawn would collect seepage and runoff from the wooded hollow upslope. Our lot was edged by an intermittent stream and was naturally damp — no doubt the reason the house

Hal Korber



had a sump pump.

In our plans, the shallow depression we had had dug would fill with water from fall to spring and become a manmade temporary, or vernal, pond. I knew that such seasonally flooded areas are magnets for frogs, toads and salamanders, places where they gather to mate and lay eggs. I also knew that such habitats are in short supply, with so much wetland draining being done in the name of "development." Although we'd had a pond excavated, I'd have to wait until the soil compacted and autumn rains came to find out if it would hold water.

My husband and I picked over the raw ground after the earthmovers left, removing pieces of glass and the odd bit of debris that the machinery had missed burying. We took away the unsightly metal support over which a backyard grapevine had hung. Electric and telephone lines that had fed the house had already been removed, and my husband sawed down the poles. We decided to leave the bit of stonewall that had edged the old driveway. Though misplaced, the rocks reminded me of abandoned farmsteads I'd occasionally found in the woods while hunting.

While local folks undoubtedly chuckled over the Steiners' folly and guessed without success what we intended for the property, we continued to unbuild it. By early spring, traces of occupation were nearly gone, but we decided to get a jump on the re-wilding. Much of the original yard had been torn up, so we wanted to not only stabilize the bare earth, but begin providing growth that would attract wildlife. A wholesale wildflower and natural vegetation company is not far from us, and sells extras and overruns retail. My husband spent an afternoon there like the proverbial kid in a candy store, coming home with far more than we needed.

He had bags of red and white clover and coreopsis, rudbeckia and blazing star, plus wildlife seed mixtures for shade and a "retention basin mix," for the wet areas. He spent a day spreading it by hand, flinging

seed on the roughened ground because the earth was too uneven for a wheeled spreader. Then we bought apple trees and nut trees to complement the fruit trees already on the property. We transplanted a half dozen blueberry bushes that weren't doing well near our house to the new plot, and placed irises and other wet-tolerant plants along the edge of the soon-to-be vernal pond.

We gladly accepted the lilacs and rose of Sharon bushes given to us — bees, butterflies, hummingbird moths, hummingbirds, and other nectar drinkers would use them. By now our friends recognized our purpose, and they all seemed to have something to contribute from their yard to our wildlife-attracting project. Some friends gave us bluebird boxes for "un-house" warming gifts.

By mid-May the time had come to sit back and wait. Rain and sun would do the rest. The ground greened quickly with the flush of early germinating seeds in the mix. Elsewhere on the property, where we had let the already established lawn remain, grass and weeds were growing high and some had gone to seed. Now that the plants were not being mowed several times a week, the parachute seeds of dandelions blew on the wind, and goldfinches picked at the ripe seed heads.

Bluebirds had investigated the boxes and one pair stayed. Wrens occupied the other box, situated at the other corner of the lot. Now that the neighbor's two noisy dogs, lawnmower and ATV were no longer around, wildlife from the nearby woods was using the property.

As the vegetation took hold and I could walk across without damaging it, I became more interested to see just how quickly wildlife would return and the landscape would go back to being natural. By mid-summer, turkey feathers and droppings showed where the birds had dusted in what had been the driveway. Crows made a nest in the willow that had once overshadowed a shed and dog pen. Flattened ovals in

knee-deep grass were evidence that deer were bedding on the site.

On a shadowy edge near the seasonal streambed, I found cardinal flower and blue lobelia. Yarrow and goldenrod were growing tall, and the planted coreopsis and rudbeckia already displayed their yellow faces. Rabbits scooted away in the clover. Hummingbirds zipped around the jewelweed that had sprouted on its own. In midsummer, as I stepped out the door into my own backyard, a huge black bear ambled up the bank from the new property. After checking that our birdfeeders were empty, the bear gave me a glance and continued into the woods behind the house.

By autumn, huge white oak acorns, which used to drop and bang on my former neighbor's metal porch roof, were falling softly to the ground, a feast for chipmunks, squirrels, blue jays, deer and other wildlife. One planted hemlock was severely ripped by a passing buck, so we wrapped the susceptible stems of the young apple trees with plastic coils to keep them from being rubbed, too. I didn't mind sacrificing one tree; that meant we were getting somewhere in our re-wilding plan. Throughout the winter, tracks in the snow showed that wildlife was still using the property. I was waiting for January, so I could mark the first anniversary of the unbuilding.

What is our renaturalized parcel like this year? I already find it difficult to remember the house that had been there. Instead of being close cropped, the lush ground cover can hardly be called a lawn anymore. Besides what we planted, natural vegetation has returned through seeds dropped by birds, blown in on the wind or emerging from roots that had been constantly cut back for years.

Early this past spring I saw bluets and violets, and colt's-foot spread sunny blooms over the near bank. The freed grapevine was rambling toward the nearest tree, and the irises were blooming at the edge of the vernal pool that had indeed filled. The

sound of the spring peepers that found this new breeding mecca was nearly deafening. A screech owl quavered from the pines, now that night-lights no longer glared, and bluebirds took over both boxes. We planted hawthorns, crabapples, spruce, pines and others trees for the future.

On a warm evening I sat on the log bench we built (our only concession to human comfort) under the spreading white oak and watched swallows and bats winging over the houseless expanse. Locust trees and staghorn sumac were encroaching on the far edge of the lot, and last year's acorns were sprouting on the side nearest our original property. The crows nested in the willow again, doves were dusting, gobblers paraded where the patio once stood, and a regular deer trail has developed.

Not everyone has the special set of circumstances I did to be able to make land wild again. I'm privileged to be able to watch the unusual change from civilized to uncivilized, from human-usable to wildlife-welcoming that is taking place and will continue to take place on our purchase. As sprawl hits even my rural county, and I must watch too many previously wild lands going under macadam and concrete, I'm thankful for the opportunity to give something back to nature. On the practical side, I got a reduction in property taxes when the building was razed and the plot was enrolled in the county's "Clean and Green" program.

Almost everyone has a spot on their property that they, too, can make wild again. The easiest way is to cease mowing and weed killing. Hands off and the natural vegetation, and the wildlife that uses it, will return. Renaturalizing can also be directed by planting seed, nut, berry and sweet flower producing plants. Seed mixes and plants are available commercially. Lots of information is available, including from the Game Commission, on making property more attractive to wildlife. For us, the way to do that was simple — unbuild it, and they came. □

Oldtimers in Pennsylvania still remember seeing regal fritillaries in undisturbed meadow and wetlands, but now the butterfly is a state endangered species.

Queen of the Fritillaries



Bruce Bonta

REGAL FRITILLARY butterfly on field thistle. Decreased habitat has caused this butterfly to become very rare.

WE NEEDED military clearance to get in, but it was worth it. In a field of native little bluestem grasses, tucked between two ridges, several mature field thistles supported dozens of nectaring regal fritillary butterflies. Most were the larger, brighter, black and deep orange-colored females, although we did spot a few dull-colored, worn-out males, as well as two other fritillaries — the great-spangled and

aphrodite — Leonard's skipper, and an orange sulphur butterfly.

My husband Bruce and I, accompanied by four biologists with the Pennsylvania chapter of The Nature Conservancy (TNC), spent a late August day at a military base in southcentral Pennsylvania, visiting the last-remaining population of regal fritillary butterflies in Pennsylvania and “perhaps the only remaining viable population in eastern North America,” according to a preliminary research paper written by Roger Latham, the principal investigator for the project.

Oldtimers in Pennsylvania still remember seeing regal fritillaries in undisturbed meadow and wetland habitats. But one by one the colonies winked out, not only in Pennsylvania but throughout eastern North America. Once the butterflies ranged in localized populations from southern New Brunswick in Canada to North Carolina. By the late 1950s, the northern colonies as far south as Massachusetts were mostly gone, except for a few offshore islands in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Those colonies too disappeared one by one, and in 1992 the last colony, on Block Island, died out.

By then the only known colony left in eastern North America was the one we were visiting. It had been discovered in the late 1980s. Because it is on a military base, several years of negotiations were necessary before TNC biologists, assisted by volunteers, could begin to monitor the population.

Today TNC manages three areas of regal fritillary butterflies totalling 165 acres and two comparison areas without fritillaries totalling 92 acres, thanks to an agreement with the Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. They have an office on the base, and their work is funded by the National Guard Bureau though the Pennsylvania Army National Guard under a 5-year cooperative agree-

"Probably the largest area of upland native grassland in the mid-Appalachian region," Latham writes in his research paper. "Soil disturbance and repeated fires . . . on land used for decades by various branches of the military as practice ranges for armored vehicles, artillery and anti-tank attack bombers" . . . have produced . . . " a modern-day analog of habitat formerly maintained for thousands of years by Native American burning, and bison grazing and trampling."

"The military," Deanna Zercher told us, "is not geared to purposely changing the habitat like farmers are. They don't plant exotic species, so the natives remained."

And native plants are what regal fritillaries seem to require. As larvae they feed on violet species. The Pennsylvania colony feeds almost exclusively on arrow-leaved violets (*Viola sagittata*), a native that grows only on highly disturbed sites. As adults they nectar most frequently on the native field thistle (*Cirsium discolor*), butterfly milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), and common milkweed (*A. syriaca*) and hide and rest in the shade of low-growing bushy shrubs and grasses such as the field of little bluestem where we first saw them.

It was a perfect day for butterflies — warm, clear, and sunny. The spectacularly colored females had just emerged from a 3-week resting period, or diapause, after a hectic courtship. Soon they would be searching for places to lay their eggs. Usually the females drop to the ground and walk around depositing large numbers of eggs, one at a time, over a period of several weeks, on or near violet leaves. Although no one knows how many eggs a wild regal fritillary lays, researchers raising regal fritillaries in captivity had one female that laid 2,450.

Bruce Bonta



(From left to right.) PETER MOORESIDE, MARCIA BONTA, PAT MCELHENNY, DEANNA ZERCHER and ROGER LATHAM looking at field thistles — prime regal fritillary butterfly habitat.

ment for TNC to assist in the base's regal conservation program and provide other natural resource services.

"Our office wouldn't be here without the funding of the military . . . some of the staff at the base have put forth a lot of effort toward the regal conservation program," says Deanna Zercher, project manager of TNC's regal fritillary habitat restoration and management study.

What does a military base have that the rest of eastern North America does not?

By late August and early September, when they lay their eggs, violet leaves are drying up, so once the eggs hatch, in 10 to 14 days, the tiny caterpillars have nothing to eat. Instead, they search for shelter in the meadow duff, where they rest until spring. Those that survive their long diapause begin feeding on the violet leaves as soon as they emerge from the soil in April. The caterpillars are black, white, orange, and red, seemingly bright enough to be easily spotted on the green leaves.

Not so, says research associate Pete Mooreside. It was his job to look for larvae in large patches of arrow-leaved violets. First he would search for nibbled violet leaves. Then he would try to spot movement.

"It was easiest for me to locate violets by slowly walking through fields. I'd often bend down to inspect violets or to search the immediate area surrounding a violet . . . after spending more than 30 hours searching in this manner, I found six regal larvae."

"It's really tricky to see them because they are often resting, wrapped up in duff and warm season grasses," he told us.

Despite finding so few larvae, they at least had an idea of where they fed, what they were eating, and when they were eating. Although most fritillary species, including regals, were thought to feed mostly at night, Mooreside found only one when he attempted a short night search. Another investigator, in Kansas, discovered that three out of 12 larvae fed during the day.

By the middle of May, the caterpillars have molted five times before pupating for six weeks. The males emerge first from their chrysalises at the end of June and feed principally on common milkweed nectar. The females emerge a week to ten days later. Then both sexes feed on butterfly milkweed.

The females often rest in the shade at the base of shrubs and small trees, where the males seek them out and mate with

them. By the middle to the end of July the males start to die out. The females disappear.

"They go into semi-hibernation, probably to conserve their energy reserves and to hide out from further harassment by the males," says Latham.

After resting the first three weeks in August, the females emerge to begin again the life cycle of regal fritillary butterflies. Then, after laying their eggs, they die.

The Nature Conservancy biologists are eager to learn more about the life history and ecology of regal fritillary butterflies, so they will know how to properly manage habitat to save them from extinction. Although the Great Plains and Midwest have larger populations of regal fritillaries they, too, are dwindling.

Here in Pennsylvania the regal fritillary butterfly is a state endangered species. To further complicate the matter, recent DNA studies by researcher Barry Williams indicate that the Pennsylvania regal fritillaries (and another smaller, recently discovered population in Virginia) have several mutational differences from the Midwest and Great Plains populations. Williams estimates that our population has been separate from those farther west for over 400,000 years.

Williams also found, by measuring the size of the spots on the underside of the wings in museum specimens, that the eastern regal fritillaries had smaller spots or none at all. In other words, the eastern regal fritillary is probably a distinct subspecies that should be protected under the Federal Endangered Species Act.

TNC biologists are trying to find habitat management methods that will save the eastern regal fritillary butterfly from extinction at the military base and that can be used to re-establish populations at other sites. Although their studies are preliminary, some of their more interesting findings are that "active regal habitat had significantly less total plant cover than nearby, similar habitat lacking regals" and

that "violet densities were significantly higher in [an accidentally] burned area . . . total plant cover was significantly lower . . . and percentage of bare ground was significantly higher in the burned area." In summary, "regal fritillary habitat differs from similar, nearby, unoccupied grasslands . . . in having nearly one-fifth less total plant cover and one-third less cover of plants other than grasses," Latham writes in his research paper.

They have also been planting more common milkweed, butterfly milkweed, and field thistle in experimental plots and, with the help of volunteers, removing invasive plants such as mile-a-minute. To create more grasslands, they have been removing Virginia pines that have been taking over in some of their research plots.

On the day of our visit, they checked another experimental plot, one that had been scarified by an armored tank to see what would happen. There we found a few field thistles, a few regals, and a tiger swallowtail butterfly. Initial results of that experiment seemed to indicate that in the short run, there were less native grasses and more nonnative grasses in the area and that plant cover in general decreased to less than half of what had been there before. But this study, like the others, are long range studies that will take years to resolve.

There was no doubt that the first spot we had visited, with stony patches and "millions of violets," as Deanna enthusi-

astically told us, as well as several mature field thistles in a sea of little bluestem, was the best site.

We had bumped over dirt roads for several miles to reach all the sites, and I was surprised at the peace and serenity of the place. I had expected to hear helicopters and planes and even shooting on a military base.

All the biologists were enthusiastic about their work and the site. Research assistant Pat McIlhenny, his binoculars slung around his neck, didn't miss a bird or butterfly. Once he pointed out a red-headed woodpecker. He also told us they had found 71 species of butterflies on the base so far including the blackdash and frosted eun.

"We've seen turkeys, black rat snakes and deer and signs of black bears, coyotes and bobcats," he said. There are also timber rattlesnakes, copperheads, and unexploded ordnances to look out for.

Still, the entire area is one of the largest, relatively-untouched wild areas in central Pennsylvania — 17,000 acres including the adjacent Stony Creek (SGL 211) and St. Anthony's Wilderness, of which 165 acres are devoted to regal fritillary butterflies.

Will it be enough to save the eastern regal fritillary from extinction? With the continual cooperation of the military and the hard work and dedication of the biologists, it is difficult to believe that they will fail. □

COVER PAINTING BY MARIE GIRIO BRUMMETT

YOU'RE more likely to see an English setter in the field, but the sturdy black and tan Gordon setter has some well endearing characteristics of its own. The Gordon setter is the heaviest, strongest and slowest of the setters, and like other setters, it is a pointer, but originally this breed scented and found game and then sat waiting for the arrival of the hunter. Limited to 350 signed and numbered prints, the artist is pleased to offer "Gordon Setter." Print size is 18¹/₄ x 14³/₄ inches, and prints are \$68 delivered. PA residents add 6% sales tax. Order from the artist at P.O. Box 7006, York, PA 17404.

Straight from the Bowstring

By P.J. Reilly

The dog days of summer will soon give way to those cool fall nights, and another bow season. Now is the time to get your gear in order.

Preseason Checklist

THIS TIME of year is when to start seriously thinking about deer season. For me, there's no better way to kill a hot, steamy summer day than by sifting through the boxes and shelves where I stow my archery gear, to see what I have, what I need and what needs to be repaired.

I keep the bulk of my gear in my basement. The treestands — climbing and hang-on portables — are stacked somewhat neatly in a dark corner, along with two stick ladders and a big box of screw-in tree steps. I keep my bowhunting clothes in a large plastic storage bin, and then there's a rolling cabinet containing several drawers that house a variety of accouterments such as broadheads, armguards, facemasks, cover scents and lures. As I examine all this gear, along with my hunting bows, I develop a list of things I need to take care of before hunting season begins.

Treestands

Statistics indicate that if you're going to get hurt bowhunting, the injury is likely to be related to your treestand. More archers will be hurt this year due to falls from their treestands, or while climbing up or down, than any other factor. Because I basically live in my treestands from October through mid-November, I inspect every part of each treestand I will use. I inspect them for safety, and I inspect them to eliminate noise that might spook a deer.

On portable stands, check each and



SPENDING time now to prepare for your days in the field can pay off big once the season opens.

every bolt holding it together. The hardware is usually pretty sturdy, so it's not likely a bolt will break, but you might find a loose nut. Many stands use nylon straps for seats, backpack straps, and to secure stands to a tree. Check all these nylon items for mildew and rotting. Some straps will start to disintegrate if exposed to direct sunlight for an extended period. If you find any problems, replace the straps or ditch the stand altogether.

Some stands, particularly a hang-on that's left in place throughout the season, have chains that wrap around the tree to secure them. Inspect each and every chain link for rust spots or cracks. If you find rust,

scrape it off with steel wool, and then treat the area with a rust inhibitor. If you find a crack, replace the chain.

Between the weather, throwing the stands in the back of my pickup on a daily basis, and repeated climbs up and down trees over the course of a hunting season, my stands take a real beating each year. This use often chips away a stand's outer coating, which is generally dull and non-reflective, exposing the shiny metal underneath. If you find some shiny spots on your stands, give them a shot of flat black, brown or green paint.

When I'm inspecting my stands for safety problems, I'm also looking for squeaks and creaks that I can eliminate. Folding seats on treestands are notorious for developing squeaks. Treat them with a silicone spray, but don't use WD-40 or any other lubricant that has a strong odor.

As a rule, I don't leave treestands hanging in the woods from one season to the next. Through friends, I've learned that squirrels and chipmunks, not to mention weather and thieves, can wreak havoc on a stand. If you leave yours out, by all means check it well before the season to make sure it's safe, and be sure to wear a safety harness while you're looking it over.

Screw-in tree steps and portable ladders need to be inspected, too. I haven't yet found a step that doesn't eventually rust, and rust inevitably will weaken a step. If you find a step that seems to be excessively rusty, pitch it. They're cheap, and it's not worth risking injury to save a couple dollars. Portable ladders typically are attached to trees either by nylon straps or ropes. Check the straps or ropes for any visible wear, and replace them accordingly.

Some hunters build "permanent" stands out of wood, leaving them up for years. These are the stands most prone to failure. The swaying of a tree can wrench bolts and nails free or, at the very least, loosen them from where they're anchored. You absolutely must inspect these stands before each season to make sure they're stable.

From a safety standpoint, my treestand is the only piece of equipment I own that I consider as high a priority as my safety harness. Notice I said safety harness, not safety belt. Harnesses are relatively new on the archery scene, and more and more bowhunting safety instructors today are preaching the value of a safety harness over a safety belt. The belt simply wraps around your waist, so if you fall, all of your weight will be put on your midsection. You could hang upside down or right side up, but either way, odds are you'll suffocate before help arrives.

A harness, however, wraps around your legs, over your shoulders and around your waist, and supports your weight. A strap attached to the back of the harness tethers you to the tree, so that if you fall, it's like hanging in a seat, and you hang with your head up and your feet down. If you haven't yet switched to a safety harness, think about it this year.

Clothing

Even though I wash every piece of my hunting clothing at the end of each season before storing them in a plastic bin for the winter, I wash everything again about a month or six weeks before the next season begins. I wash my clothes in a non-scented detergent. Sometimes I buy special detergent designed for hunters, but I've also used plain baking soda. The latest craze is detergent that's guaranteed to kill ultraviolet reflection and luminescence. According to the promotional information published by more than one company touting its "UV killer," birds and animals are sensitive to ultraviolet wavelengths. The companies say birds and animals can see an ultraviolet glow contained in fabric dyes and detergents, which means, to them, our clothes have a glow-in-the-dark appearance. I'm not entirely convinced that UV killers make a difference. I've shot a lot of deer while wearing clothes that were not protected from ultraviolet wavelengths. I think masking your scent is far more im-

portant, but if you believe in UV killers, by all means, give them a try.

After washing your clothes in a non-scented detergent or in baking soda, hang them outside to dry. Don't put them in the dryer, because you'll fill them up with scent held in the machine from previous loads of wash. Once my clothes are dry, I take them off the line and immediately stow them in a trash bag, which keeps smells outside the bag from getting into my clothes. I'll also throw in a couple of H.S. Scents earth scent wafers. After just a week, the scent from these wafers works its way through every fiber of the clothes in the bag. If you've never smelled the fresh earth scent, it's basically the smell of humus. Go out in the woods after a rain and kick over some leaves — the smell greeting your nostrils is humus.

Some bowhunters I know never bring their hunting clothes indoors once they've washed and sealed them in a plastic bag. While I don't bring mine inside the main part of my house, I do store my bag on the cement floor in my basement, and I haven't noticed any negative effects.

Bows, Arrows, Other Gear

If you have to do some work on your bow, now's the time to get it done. This time of year, there's plenty of time for your local pro shop to do what you need, and once the work is completed, there will be time to sight in your bow properly. One of the first things I check around this time each year is the string on my bow. Look for signs of wear at the cams. That's usually one of the first places a string will begin to fray.

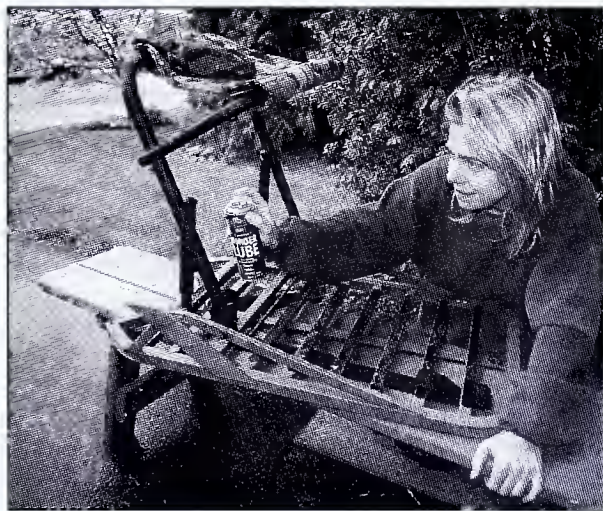
Place an arrow on the string and draw back your bow as far as you can. If the arrow falls off the back of the arrow rest, and it typically doesn't,

your string has probably stretched a good bit. You can either replace the string, or you can put your bow in a press and give the string a few twists, which will tighten it up. How does the serving look? The serving is the extra layer of string or monofilament where you nock your arrow. If the serving is frayed or the strands have separated, have it replaced.

If your bow makes noise when you draw it back, try to pinpoint the source of the sound. Sometimes cables squeak where they slide across their various anchors and pulleys. A dab of silicone jelly will usually cure this problem. If the sound is coming from your cams, which is a frequent problem, consider having your pro shop clean your bow.

Typically, a squeak in a cam is caused by dirt, and if you just spray the cam with oil, you'll only invite more dirt. The oil will kill the squeak for a time, but it will come back — maybe when you're drawing on a trophy buck. A pro shop staffer will take your bow apart and clean out the dirt thoroughly and properly. No dirt, no squeak.

Take a good look at your arrows. The glue that holds your fletchings gets old. When it does, it turns white and then the fletching will separate from the arrow shaft. Typically, I strip the fletchings off my hunting arrows each year, and glue fresh ones



LUBRICATE your treestand now to eliminate any squeaks that can cost you a deer during the season.

in place with my fletching jig. While you're examining your fletchings, check your nocks, too. If they're cracked, pull them off and put on new ones.

Unless you're using brand new ones, plan on sharpening your broadheads or replacing the individual blades. A razor-sharp broadhead is an archer's best friend. Imagine this: No doubt you've tried cutting a piece of rope with a dull knife. To sever the rope, you probably had to work the blade in a sawing motion, because one pass didn't cut it. Well, when you're shooting an arrow at a deer, you get only one swipe through a deer's innards. If your aim is not quite perfect, and your broadhead is dull, you might only rub a vital organ or artery, while a sharp arrow point will slice

its way through. Sure, if you hit a deer's heart or lungs dead center, even a dull broadhead will puncture the organ, but you have to prepare for being less than perfect.

I don't know about you, but the pack I carry into my treestand is full of gadgets. I carry hooks to hang up my bow, binoculars, scent lures, deer calls, a drag rope, a knife, a flashlight, etc. It's a good idea to check all of these items before the opening morning.

Creating and then working on a pre-season checklist generates peace of mind. When you know your equipment is prepared for the season, you can focus your full attention on the deer. Attending to these details can mean the difference between a filled tag and an empty freezer. □

***Fun Games* — By Connie Mertz**

Fun With Doves

Circle the words (forward and backward) that pertain to doves, and then copy the remaining letters not circled to complete the sentence below.

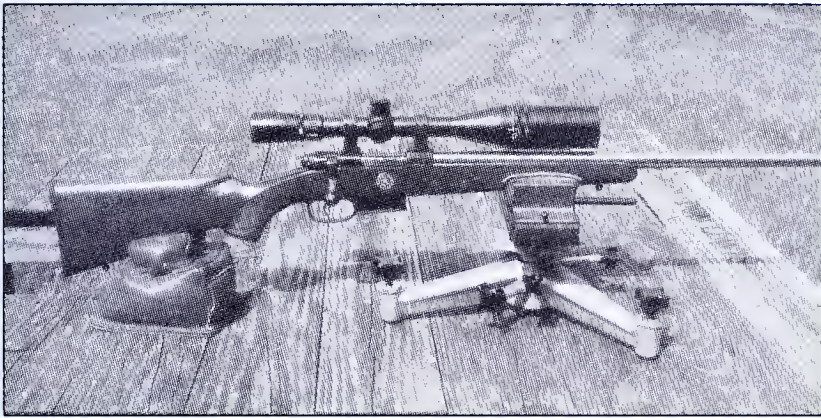
W H I S T L I N G W I N G S M
C O O I G G N I N R U O M
G R A Y R S Q U A B S K C O L F
A D E T N U H T R O C K E T O
P I G E O N S M I L K R S N I A R G
W E E D S E E D S S L I A T X O F Y

Doves are _ _ _ _ _ .

answers on p. 63

Looking for an ideal varmint cartridge for young hunters? Look no further than the . . .

.19 Calhoon — More than just a Wildcat



Helen Lewis

.19 Calhoon rifle built by JAMES CALHOON on a CZ 527 Mini Mauser action. LEWIS'S rifle, topped with a 4-16x Sightron scope, is extremely accurate.

fire-formed to a straight wall case with a 30-degree shoulder angle. The result is a case that has a bit more powder capacity. Admittedly, the increase is no more than $1\frac{1}{4}$ grains, but in a case the size of the Hornet, an extra grain or so of powder does make a major difference.

THE CHUCK was moving through a patch of high grass along the edge of a woods 180 yards away, according to my Bushnell Yardage Pro rangefinder. While the shooter waited patiently for an open shot, gusting winds rippled the new growth of clover in the hayfield. When the chuck bolted upright along the edge of the field, the rifle cracked and a 32-grain bullet ended the hole digger's career. Although it was a long shot, another 50 yards wouldn't have made much difference for the .19 Calhoon.

The .19 Calhoon is simply a .22 Hornet case necked down to a 19-caliber and

The .22 Hornet made its debut around 1930 when experimenters at the Springfield Armory, including Colonel Townsend Whelen and Captain G. L. Wotkins, used the old Winchester blackpowder .22 Centerfire (WCF) case to build the first American high velocity small bore cartridge designed primarily for varmint hunting. For the most part, the varmint hunting crowd accepted the Hornet with open arms.

It's somewhat of a paradox that the Savage .22 Hi-Power, which was introduced in 1912, had all the requisites to play a key role in the varmint hunting realm. With

maximum loads of several brands of powder, the .22 Hi-Power could generate muzzle velocities more than 3,000 fps. Although it was an excellent varmint cartridge, it was lacking somewhat in accuracy in the Savage Model 99 lever action rifle. It was touted that the .22 Hi-Power was adequate for varmints and medium size big game, but that was not exactly true. The Savage Hi-Power has a .228 bore diameter, instead of .224, and even with a 70-grain bullet at 2,900 fps, it's not a deer stopper. It fell into a moribund stage, and the advent of the .222 Remington in 1950 more or less sounded the death knell for the .228 bore. The old cartridge has been relegated to the ranks of the unwanted, but it's worth noting that in a strong single-shot action, the .22 Savage Hi-Power is no slouch for long range shooting in the pasture fields.

With all the hoopla the Hornet received, it was not a super accurate cartridge compared to the .222 Remington, .22-250 Remington and even the Winchester .220 Swift. When Winchester introduced the .218 Bee in 1938, the .22 Hornet's 2,650 fps was no match for the Bee's higher velocities. In 1940, a New York gunsmith by the name of Lysle Kilbourn decided to give the Hornet a boost by improving it. Kilbourn took some of the long taper out of the Hornet case and sharpened the shoulder angle to 40 degrees. Fire-forming then pushed the case out to the new chamber's dimension. The new design permitted several more grains of powder, which increased the muzzle velocity by several hundred feet per second, putting it on equal terms with Winchester's .218 Bee. However, one nagging problem still remained: The improved case didn't enhance the Hornet's questionable long range accuracy.

To suggest why the .22 Hornet wasn't accurate much beyond 150 yards would be only speculation. Some Hornet fans feel the .224 bullet might be too large for such a small case. The Hornet's 2,650 fps muzzle velocity is enough to easily make a 45-grain

bullet effective on varmints well beyond 200 yards, yet the Hornet has been labeled a 150-yard cartridge. Recently, a 35-grain .224 bullet appeared that pushed the Hornet's muzzle velocity to around 3,000 fps. Because the diameter remained unchanged, the 35-grain slug is a bit shorter. Range tests proved the 35-grain was similar to the 40-grain in accuracy at short ranges, but the extra velocity didn't make the 35-grain bullet a 250-yard varmint stopper. The .222 Remington's less-than-an-inch group potential caused a lot of Hornets to be traded, sold or retired.

James Calhoun — Shambo Rt. 304, Havre, Montana 59501 — basically traced the steps of Lysle Kilbourn, but then took an extra step: Calhoun reduced the caliber from .224 to .197. This resulted in longer, thinner bullets, which are more accurate. For the 19-caliber, Calhoun offers a good weight selection, including 27-, 32-, 36- and 40-grain bullets. The 27-grain slug can be pushed out of the muzzle at around 3,600 fps, and the 32-grain bullet (which produced the most accurate groups) exits at slightly more than 3,300 fps.

While velocity is important for long range shooting, it has no value whatsoever if accuracy suffers.

It appears from several years of range testing that the 19-caliber Calhoun bullet is more suited for the Hornet's small case than a .224 bullet. Although I didn't shoot any one-hole 5-shot groups, many were in the half-inch category, and that's more than adequate for long range varmint shooting.

The .19 Calhoun began life as a true wildcat, and unlike the improved K-Hornet, which is made from simply firing a .22 Hornet case in an improved chamber to fire-form it to the new chamber's dimensions, the .19 Calhoun is a pure wildcat. The parent cartridge cannot be fired in the new chamber.

Calhoun offers two rebarrel kits for the 19-caliber. One is the 19/223 based on the

.223 Remington cartridge, and the other is the .19 Calhoon. The rebarrel kit consists of a chambered barrel (stainless or chrome moly steel), a set of forming/reloading dies, 100 bullets, several 19-caliber brass brushes, reloading data and complete instructions for threading the barrel, which must be done by a gunsmith. It's safe to say that any .22 Hornet action can be used, except for the old Savage 23D, which has a one piece receiver and barrel. It's also possible to use some .22 rimfire actions, such as the old Remington 581 and 591 series. That might sound impossible, because the .22 Hornet case is a centerfire, but the bolt can be altered to a centerfire.

If you're interested, master gunsmith Dennis Olsen, Box 334, 500 First Street, Plains, Montana 59859, has been converting Remington 581 and 591 actions to centerfire for many years. Because 5mm Rimfire Magnum ammunition is no longer available, converting a 591 to the .19 Calhoon is a viable outlet for owners of the discontinued 591. Like the 581 Remington series, the 591 bolt incorporates six strong locking lugs, making it strong enough for the .19 Calhoon centerfire.

In a step towards becoming a factory offering, shooters may now obtain 19 Calhoon rifles directly from Calhoon. Rifles are being built on two actions. One is the Ruger 77 VHZ and the other on a CZ 527 Mini Mauser. The rifle tested for this article is built on the CZ 527 action. The barrel is a heavy Pac-Nor Super Match stainless steel varmint version. The receiver is bedded with a free-floated barrel in a target vented walnut stock. The rifle comes with a crisp, 2-pound trigger pull. The detachable magazine holds five rounds. The CZ 527 Mini Mauser action is smooth working with a rocker-type safety that pulls back to the firing position.

Ammunition is available, too, although transforming a .22 Hornet case to a .19 Calhoon is relatively simple. Use the full length resizing die to neck the Hornet case

down to 19-caliber. Select a medium powder charge for the bullet weight used and fire-form. Fire-forming can be accomplished while hunting, so there's no need to waste bullets and powder making new cases. Once the case is fire-formed, it can be reloaded with a heavier powder charge. As mentioned, the chambered barrel must be threaded by a gunsmith for the action being used. If a .22 rimfire action will be used, it's wise to first check with either Calhoon or Olsen to make certain the action is suitable, and to get some idea of the costs involved.

There's no danger the new .19 Calhoon cartridge will relegate the old .22 Hornet to the ranks of the unwanted. The Hornet has survived numerous challenges from other superior cartridges over the years. In the hearts of many older varmint hunters, the .22 Hornet represents the golden years of varmint hunting. Back then, the epitome of a varmint rig was the Savage 23D topped with a 3x Weaver 29S scope. Such an outfit is a far cry from what today's varmint shooters have to choose from.

The .19 Calhoon cartridge has basically the same low noise level produced by the .22 Hornet, but offers an additional hundred yards of accurate shooting. The .19 Calhoon is an ideal starting varmint rifle for young hunters. It's a high quality product assembled with painstaking care that will give years of dependable service. The .19 Calhoon is proof that wildcatting continues to make a major contribution to the shooting world. □

Fun Game answers:

whistling wings, coo, mourning, gray, squab, flocks, hunted, rocket, pigeon milk, grains, weed seeds, foxtails.

MIGRATORY.

Bird's-eye View

I WAS DOZING when the jet hit some mild turbulence, a few bumps that woke me up and made me peer down through the window with the slow blink like an owl in daylight. The flat Midwestern farmland was gone, the immense squares of corn and soybeans delineated by straight-edged roads and narrow, meandering streams. Instead, there were now hills below, rumpled and disordered, an even mix of fields and forest. It was plateau country, from 20,000 feet up a spider web of small drainages and big rents where rivers ran, but already there was a prickle of familiarity.

There is always the moment of recognition, when the terrain suddenly snaps into focus, like picking out the face of a friend in a crowd. No longer are those merely anonymous pleats and folds scrolling beneath me, but mountains and valleys and streams to which I can put names — and memories.

Ah, yes. There's the Sinnemahoning, coming down from the northwest through the elk range to dump into the West Branch, and the Kettle Creek squiggling north, where I've spent many evenings on the long riffles, casting a fly as the light faded and the mergansers, white and black, dove for minnows. The Fish Dam Run area appeared to the south, where last year a buddy and I spent the wettest day of my life, trying to run a bird survey in drowning downpours while scrambling over wind-thrown hemlocks — drenched to the skin, muddy from head to toe, reeking with sweat under our rain gear and happy as two kids in a puddle.

Then the land gave way to the long ridges and endless valleys that form Pennsylvania's spine, the landscape that speaks most deeply to me, and the familiar topography I hunt for whether I'm traveling by air or land. Most poignant for me is the long, low swell of the Kittatinny Ridge. I've looked for that mountain more times than I can count when returning from places far distant and, like as not, a good deal flatter and less interesting than the old hills of my home. Yet even when I'm homeward bound from some exotic corner of the world, the sight can bring a lump to my throat.

Nor was the history that passed beneath me, my face pressed against the plane's window, only my own. The plane had banked, coming to a different heading; there was Tuscarora Mountain, below which ran the old Indian trail that connected the Iroquois lands in New York with the tribes far to the south, and along which the dispossessed Tuscaroras marched after their homes in North Carolina were destroyed in 1713. Nearby was Lewistown, the old Shawnee town of Kishacoquillas, before the Shawnee were forced west to the Ohio and the French umbrella.

The plane sank lower, the mountains now in sharp relief, the Juniata merging with the wide curves of the Susquehanna — just the sweet Algonquian syllables alone are delicious on the tongue — the big river cutting through ridges bathed in late-day light, light flickering off the moving water. It was lovely beyond words, all of it. Soon, I'd be back on the ground, submerged in the noise and commotion of life. For now, though, hanging in the air, I tried to gather it all in my eye and heart, the grand immensity that is Pennsylvania, to hold against the next time I leave for other, lesser places.

Scott Weidensaul

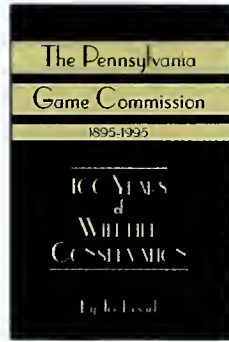
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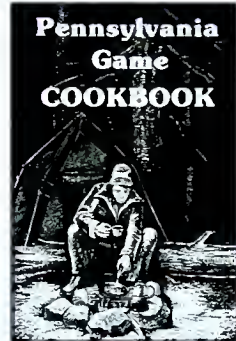


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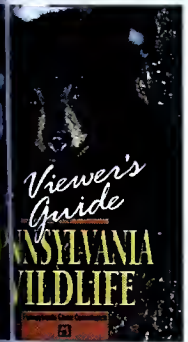


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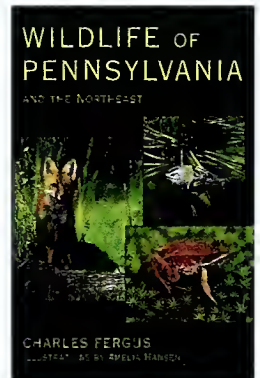


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Elk Hunt 2002

This Could Be You

"I'm the guy who buys a \$1,000 worth of raffle tickets each year and never wins a thing," Daniel Burk said, before last year's elk license drawing.

Your application can be drawn, too, but to "win" you have to play. Take a shot this year; you never know.



DANIEL BURK with his 6x6 trophy bull taken last year.

ELK LICENSE APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

The drawing to select the 70 "winners" will be held Saturday, Sept. 28, 2002. The elk license application can be completed in the following ways:

1. Use the Game Commission's e-commerce site. Go to www.pgc.state.pa.us and click on "The Outdoor Shop." Complete the form and submit your credit card information. E-commerce applications will be accepted through Sept. 13, 2002.
2. Use the form in the Pennsylvania Digest of Hunting & Trapping Regulations. Provide all required information, enclose a check or money order for the nonrefundable \$10 fee and mail to the PGC by Aug. 23, 2002.
3. Use the application form found on the PGC website www.pgc.state.pa.us. Print the form, provide all required information, enclose check or money order for the nonrefundable \$10 fee and mail to the PGC by Aug. 23, 2002.

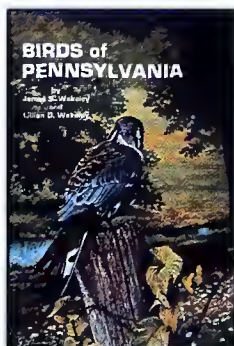
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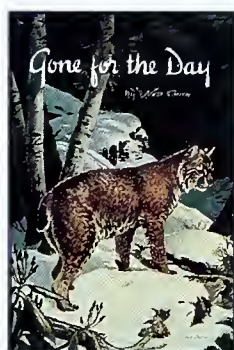
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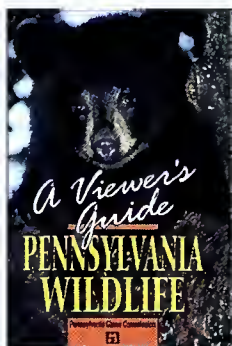
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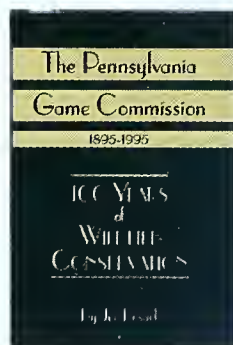
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PENNSYLVANIA GAME NEWS (ISSN 0031-451X) is published monthly for \$12 per year, \$34.50 for three years, or membership in Pennsylvania's Cooperative Farm-Game Project or Safety Zone Project; to Canada and all other foreign countries, \$13 U.S. currency, per year. Published by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Phone (717) 787-4250. Periodicals postage paid at Harrisburg, Pa. CHANGE OF ADDRESS: POSTMASTER: Send both old and new addresses to Pennsylvania Game News, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Allow six weeks for processing. Material accepted is subject to our requirements for editing and revising. Author payment covers all rights and title to accepted material, including manuscripts, photographs, drawings and illustrations. No information contained in this magazine may be used for advertising or commercial purposes. Opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Copyright © 2002 by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, an Equal Opportunity Employer, the programs of which are all administered consistent with the goals and objectives of Affirmative Action. All rights reserved.

NOTICE: Subscriptions received and processed by the last day of each month will begin with the second month following.

Newsstand consultant, Celtic Moon Publishing, 1-877-730-6263



PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

www.pgc.state.pa.us

Educating for the Future

DO YOU KNOW what the most common cause of pollution of our streams and rivers is? Less than one in four Pennsylvanians do. How about the primary benefit of wetlands? A little more than half of the state knows. This, unfortunately, is normal, when compared to the nation's environmental knowledge. Pennsylvania, however, is taking steps to break out of the norm.

In January 2002, the Academic Standards for Environment and Ecology were finalized by the state Board of Education. The standards determine what students should know at the end of fourth, seventh, tenth and twelfth grades in the following areas: Watersheds and Wetlands; Renewable and Nonrenewable Resources; Environmental Health; Agriculture and Society; Integrated Pest Management; Ecosystems and their Interactions; Threatened, Endangered and Extinct Species; Humans and the Environment; and Environmental Laws and Regulations. Many people were involved in developing the standards, including Theresa Alberici, Wildlife Conservation Education Specialist in the Game Commission's Harrisburg headquarters.

The standards were designed around environmental issues and subjects in the real world, so that students might better understand how their lives relate to the natural world and the resources it provides.

The standards do not tell school districts what courses they must teach. Rather, they serve as a guide to help individual school districts create their own curriculum, tailored to address local concerns, to meet these standards. The article on page 31 tells what part the Game Commission plays in helping educate students, putting them closer to meeting the standards.

Perhaps the most important benefit of these guidelines is the fact that the focus is on Pennsylvania's environment and ecology. Most high school students are taught how many acres of rainforest are being burned an hour, but aren't taught about Pennsylvania's major watersheds.

Don't get me wrong. I think it's extremely important that people know about and understand what's going on in other parts of the world. However, I think it's important for them to *first* realize what goes on in their own backyards.

For example, by the end of fourth grade, students should be able to identify plants, fish, insects and amphibians found in fresh water. Even now, I have to consult a field guide to pick out certain plants along the stream, and the insects are too numerous for me to even begin to identify them all. How wonderful it would be to know more about these things.

By enacting these standards, we are giving students a wonderful gift. After graduation, they will enter the world full of knowledge about it. They will be fully aware of how important a healthy environment is to their existence, and they will be the ones making the decisions that will impact the environment, even in their own backyards, forever. — *Larissa Rose*

letters

Editor:

I recently returned to my home in rural Milan from my other home in Florida. Leaving at 3 a.m. and arriving in Milan at 11 p.m., it was a tiring trip. Coming up through the mountains I saw a few deer, and was glad to get to bed.

The next morning, I looked out my window and saw a large hen turkey about 50 feet from my back door.

An hour later a large doe and two frisky fawns entertained me for about 20 minutes. A little later a deer crossed my yard and went down to the creek for a drink and a rabbit ran across the yard. In late afternoon, when reading my mail, I looked up and saw a hummingbird checking out an empty feeder in my breezeway.

The next morning I filled it, and within 10 minutes, he was back. Returning from a shopping trip, I turned onto the dirt road and saw, a hundred yards ahead, standing in the middle of the road, a black bear. He didn't seem at all afraid as he walked over the berm and into the brush.

Having just lost my loving wife of 55 years, I believe God sent all these creatures to welcome me home to an empty house.

E. PATTERSON
MILAN

Editor:

Apparently still impressed with the effects of our Thanksgiving Day dinner a couple weeks earlier, our 2-year-old son came running into the kitchen all excited by

what he had just seen.

"Mommy, Mommy," he screamed, "Daddy's got a giant turkey leg."

I looked out the window, trying to figure out what he was talking about, and saw my husband walking up the driveway, carrying the hind quarter of the deer he had shot the day before.

Frankly, I'd hate to see a turkey that size, wouldn't you?

P. WILSON
ROARING SPRING

Editor:

I'm 11 years old and looking forward to hunting. My dad and grandfather are teaching me about gun safety and how to be a good hunter. My grandparents got me *Game News*, which I really enjoy, and this fall I'm taking my Hunter-Trapper Education course. I'm looking forward to many years of hunting.

J. GEORGE
MERCER

Editor:

I enjoy *Game News*, but a part I miss is the "It's the Law." This was always an educational and informational part of the magazine. Can you resume printing this short paragraph?

D. HALDEMAN
DOUGLASSVILLE

Editor:

The new antler restrictions may benefit everyone in

the future, but they will certainly not benefit the Game Commission financially in the near future.

Myself and three others will not be hunting in Pennsylvania because of these new restrictions. Hunting involves more than the size of antlers. You failed to mention the penalty for accidentally taking an undersized deer.

R. NEDLEY
WILLOWICK, OH

Despite claims to the contrary, the Game Commission does not manage deer for financial purposes. To learn about deer management, check out the series of deer management articles we started running in the July issue. And for information on accidentally killed deer, see page 44.

Editor:

It's good to see the change in antler restrictions this year. I passed up two spikes last year and ended up with no venison but with no regrets.

T. BAKER
MILTON, FL

Editor:

As an occasional reader of *Game News*, I found "Hunting in the Big City" very appealing. Now, when we drive by the King of Prussia Mall, and my husband says, "I shot a lot of pheasants and rabbits in this area," I'll understand.

A. ZUGAY
TROOPER

Your comments are welcome. Mail them to "Letters," 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Letters will be edited for brevity and clarity.

This disease is threatening deer and elk across North America. And like other state wildlife agencies, the Game Commission is doing everything possible to keep CWD from entering our state.

Chronic Wasting Disease

By Bob Mitchell

Editor

CWD is a neurological disease in deer and elk. There is no cure. No vaccine. It's always fatal. And left unchecked, affected deer and elk populations could be wiped out in 50 years.

It hasn't shown up in Pennsylvania, but the Game Commission is doing everything in its power to keep it that way.

The CWD syndrome was discovered in 1967, at a wildlife research facility in Colorado. It was identified (and named) in 1978. It first showed up in a wild population, in Colorado, in 1981. In 1996, it was found in a captive elk herd in South Dakota, and then in captive elk herds in several Midwestern states and Canadian provinces (and South Korea). By 2000, CWD had shown up in the wild, but in deer living adjacent to infected herds in Nebraska, South Dakota and Saskatchewan.

Early this year, though, it was learned that CWD had, inexplicably, jumped the Mississippi, 900 miles from the nearest known source, to Wisconsin.

CWD is limited to cervids, the group of mammals that includes deer and elk. The disease produces small lesions in the brain that ultimately result in death. How CWD is spread is not known. It's believed

that the disease may be spread both directly (animal to animal) and indirectly (soil or other surface to animal). The most common mode of transmission from an infected animal is thought to be via saliva and feces.

What the PGC is Doing

The Game Commission has been on top of CWD. Every elk killed during last year's season was tested, and all results were negative. Then it was learned that a commercial elk propagator in Pennsylvania had purchased elk from a farm in Colorado that had been identified as CWD infected. The animals tested negative, but the incident demonstrated how wide open our borders were.

In response, the Game Commission formed a task force to work with the state Agriculture Department to prevent CWD from entering the state and, should the disease show up here, define what each agency's role will be.

Soon after, in January, the state Department of Agriculture banned the importation of cervids from any state with known cases of CWD.

Then, in August, in light of unexplained advances of CWD into Wisconsin,

sin, and also into New Mexico and western Colorado, the Game Commission banned the importation of any live cervids from any state or nation, to safeguard both wild and captive herds.

Because any concentration of deer or elk assists in the spread of many diseases, including CWD, the feeding of deer may be banned. (State law already prohibits the feeding of elk).

Wisconsin is serving as a proving ground for dealing with CWD, but there's no question we want to keep it out of Pennsylvania at all costs.

Wisconsin began testing for CWD in 1999. Last fall, three deer taken during deer season, all from the same management unit, tested positive. Then, from a 450-square-mile area around where those deer had been found, more than 500 deer were killed and tested, and 15 more cases were found.

Now, hunters and wildlife managers are attempting to kill thousands of deer over thousands of acres in an attempt to head off the disease. And this is all being done at the expense of wildlife habitat protection and enhancement programs.

In fact, the costs are so high that in early May, during a special session, the Wisconsin legislature passed a measure to spend \$4 million to test deer. That same month, the U.S. Department of Agriculture awarded Wisconsin \$3.5 million to combat the disease. The award is part of a 3-year \$18.5 million federal funding request made by the state.

Not Transmissible to Humans

No scientific evidence exists that indicates CWD is transmissible to humans. As far as hunting in Pennsylvania, normal precautions such as not shooting any abnormally acting animal and using disposable gloves while field-dressing are things we all should be doing anyway. Hunters going out of state, especially to states where CWD exists, should check with those states to see what additional

Infected animals may not show any symptoms in the early stages, but as the disease progresses, infected animals display abnormal behavior, such as staggering or standing with poor posture, or carrying the head and ears lowered. Infected animals become very emaciated (thus wasting disease). They will also often stand near and consume large amounts of water. Drooling or excessive salivation may be apparent.

Note that these symptoms are also characteristic of diseases other than CWD.

If you should find an animal exhibiting these symptoms, contact the nearest Game Commission region office. Do not attempt to contact, disturb, kill or remove the animal.

precautions and restrictions may be recommended there.

Again this year the Game Commission will test all hunter-killed elk, and then, during the rifle deer season, enough deer will be tested to make sure, statistically, we're CWD free. The agency is also going to start monitoring the acquisition and disposal of deer and elk among the commercial propagators.

Antler restrictions, doe license allocations, how long this or that deer season may be: They're all pretty insignificant compared to CWD. Our hunting heritage, our ability to manage deer, and the \$4.8 billion hunting pumps into our state economy are all at risk. As hunters, we need to let our elected officials know of our concerns about CWD, and we need to support whatever financial assistance is needed to combat CWD.

For the latest on CWD, especially in Pennsylvania, check out the Game Commission's website, www.pgc.state.pa.us. For a national perspective, visit www.cwd-info.org, the Chronic Wasting Disease Alliance. And for what Wisconsin is doing, go to www.dnr.state.wi.us. □

My Birthday Present

By Joe Yakobosky

NOVEMBER 12, 2001, was a special day for me. It dawned cold and clear in Cameron County on the opening day of the first elk season in 70 years. I stood in the dark with two close friends and three strangers who would soon become new friends. I stared at the star-studded sky and thought about the events that had brought me to the base of Tunnel Hill on this day.

My love for hunting began 30 years earlier, on the first day I had accompanied my dad on a pheasant hunt when I was nine. Although not old enough to hunt, I was the most excited person in the group. I soaked in everything that day — the fall leaves, the cackling roosters and, most importantly, the camaraderie of the group. A hunter was born.

When I first heard about the elk hunt I immediately knew that I wanted to become part of it, and I sent in my application right away. Months

passed and I didn't think much about the elk license drawing until the week prior to September 29. I joked with a couple friends, saying that if any of us drew a tag, the others would accompany him, knowing our chances were better to have the winning number in the lottery.

On September 29, the day after my 39th birthday, I was watching TV with my daughters when the phone rang. The caller introduced himself as Mike Schmit from the Game Commission. Mike informed me that I was one of 30 people to draw an elk license. Talk about a birthday present! My kids thought I was crazy, pacing back and forth saying over and over, "You're kidding me!" Never in my wildest dreams did I consider being one of the "lucky 30." To add even more good news, Mike told me that I had drawn tag number 8, which was a bull tag for management area 4, a high-density elk area. My head was spinning that night. I couldn't eat, sleep or do anything involving mental activity. I called all my friends and told them I had drawn an elk license.

This hunt would differ from a Western elk hunt in many ways. Most guided hunts involve a year or more of preparation. Guides are researched thoroughly, references checked, vacations are planned, lodging is obtained well in advance. In this case, instead of months or years, everything had to be accomplished in just six weeks. Eighty-eight guides were listed on the information sheet from the Game Commission, but how many of them had ever



JOE YAKOBOSKY with his 6x7 550-pound bull elk taken in the Tunnel Hill area in Cameron County on November 12, 2001.

guided anyone for anything, let alone elk? How many of them were familiar with my particular unit? Would they know what to do with a 700-pound animal once it was on the ground? Where was I going to stay? A lot of questions had to be answered in a short period of time. I had to act quickly.

A couple days later I was on the phone with Don Jacobs, host of the TV show "Pennsylvania Outdoor Life," and I extended an invitation to him to join my friends and me on the hunt. I felt it was important to have media coverage of this historical event, as hunting is such a large part of our heritage, and "Pennsylvania Outdoor Life" has always given great coverage to the expanding elk herd. Don graciously accepted, and offered the name of a person who would eventually become my guide and friend — Dick Hribar from Coudersport. I spoke with Dick that evening, and set a time to meet with him to show me around the hunting area.

I met Dick in Driftwood on October 6, one week after the drawing. My friends and I were immediately impressed with his knowledge of the elk herd, as well as his overall woodsmanship. Dick had hunted the area his whole life and had miles of video footage of the elk herd. Having guided elk hunters in Colorado for 12 years certainly didn't hurt, either. I left Driftwood that evening in high spirits. I had booked a great guide, and had a beautiful area with a lot of elk. Dick was also going to arrange for our lodging. Things were definitely falling into place.

Having the guide and lodging secured, I now had to make sure that I could make an accurate shot when needed. Many trips to the gun club with my Ruger .300 Winchester Magnum increased my confidence. I knew where the bullet would hit at 25 out to 200 yards. I also did a lot of shooting with my old .22 rifle. Shooting from the bench, prone and sitting positions all helped me fine-tune those skills we too often take for granted.

As the weeks passed I made several

scouting trips to Cameron County. Each trip brought a change in weather, as well as elk patterns. The rut ended and the elk switched from grazing in the fields to feeding on the abundant acorn crop. They were also dispersing quite a bit, making them more difficult to locate, which increased my anxiety. My fears were soon calmed, though, as I spoke with my guide four days prior to the hunt. Dick felt that the elk were falling into a pattern, and he had a good idea of where to find them on the opening morning.

The day before the hunt, we met at the mandatory orientation session in St. Mary's. The Game Commission personnel presented an excellent program, covering hunter ethics, safety, history of the elk herd, elk anatomy, shot placement and field care. Everyone left the orientation on a high that words cannot describe. That evening Dick Hribar, my friends Dallas Hackman and Dennis Reed, Don Jacobs, Don's cameraman, Doug Engle and I discussed the next morning's strategy. We all went to bed, but I don't think anyone got much sleep.

The day dawned cold and clear as Dick and I slowly walked down the moonlit logging road toward the hollow, with our group lagging behind. Dick broke the silence with a bugle. No answer. As the sky brightened, we spotted the first elk, across the river, making their way toward us. We watched them through binoculars, impressed with their alertness and nimbleness. I'm always amazed at how such a large animal can move so quietly and with such grace.

At 7 o'clock we dropped down into the hollow and noticed elk sign everywhere. Soon we spotted elk feeding 200 yards above us — two cows and a bull. Everyone jockeyed into position to watch, hoping I'd take the first bull elk in the modern hunt. Af-

ter turning the power up on my scope to get a better view, I decided that the bull was not what I was looking for. Dick just about had a heart attack when I told him I'd pass, but I knew what I wanted if given the chance.

The rest of the morning was spent watching deer, squirrels and chipmunks forage for acorns. I began second-guessing myself about passing up the bull, but regardless of the outcome, it was a beautiful fall day to be in the woods. The morning ended without any more elk being sighted, and we returned to the truck. After a quick lunch, we checked another area for elk sign. The new area was to be our "Plan B" if needed. At 3 o'clock, we returned to the area we had hunted in the morning, ready to try again. I told my group that I felt lucky.

We walked slowly along a logging trail, this time with more determination, and it was evident where the elk were feeding. Three cows descended from a hillside and began feeding on acorns in front of us on the trail. After a few minutes the elk fed off the trail and headed down a hollow. I crested a knob on the trail and spotted the tips of antlers in a ravine 150 yards below — big antlers. I motioned to the others that there was a bull below. Looking through the scope, I knew immediately that it was a big one — lots of mass and long tines. Not wanting to take a chance with an off-hand shot, I slowly moved to a tree and waited for the bull to offer a better shot. With the cameras rolling and

my friends all watching, I remembered my dad's words, "Make that first shot count."

I placed the crosshairs behind the bull's shoulder, took careful aim and squeezed the trigger. The bull lunged forward and ran over a knob, never presenting a follow-up shot. The bullet had found its mark, however, as he piled up 50 yards from where he had been standing. The bull had a massive 6x7 rack. My party was overcome with emotion and everyone shouted for joy. I was proud to share a once in a lifetime opportunity with five good friends, something few people ever get to experience.

As we made our way to the check station that evening, the support of the local people was incredible. Stopping in front of a restaurant, we were mobbed by a group of well-wishers with cheering and lots of backslapping.

Everyone was interested in the story of the hunt, which we were more than happy to share. Pulling into the check station, we all were brimming with pride. I know now what it must be like to win the World Series, as this was the world series of hunting to me. I was informed that my elk was the seventh brought in that day, and that it was 5½ years old.

The look on Rawley Cogan's face showed pure pride, and I was extremely happy to be part of this historical event. The Game Commission and conservation groups such as the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and Safari Club International, as well as the local people in the elk range are to be commended for their work and enthusiasm. The elk hunt would not have been possible or meant as much without these groups. □

Online elk license applications will be accepted through Sept. 13, 2002. Go to www.pgc.state.pa.us and click on "The Outdoor Shop." Complete the form and submit your credit card info.



To Snare a Flat Tail

By Bill Everett

OPEN-WATER SNARING for beavers has been permitted in Pennsylvania for only a couple years. And while this Luzerne County trapper has caught plenty in footholds and conibears, here's how I got my first one in a snare.

I slogged onward, disgusted with myself because my surefire 330 conibear channel set was beaverless, and I was somewhat heavier. A few minutes earlier I had taken an unexpected plunge through the ice into an unseen channel. It was the vernal equinox that day, but not my idea of being the best way to put spring into one's step. As I neared the set, something looked out of place. Unless my eyes were deceiving me,

the dead snag that I used to support the snare was gone. My heart rate quickened as I made my way to the set, and sure enough, not only was the support snag gone, so was my snare.

Beginning with the 2000-01 beaver trapping season, snares could be used for taking the big rodents, and they could be completely or partly submerged. A snare for beaver trapping must be 3/32 in diameter, and a metal ferrule must be crimped on the cable to prevent the snare loop from closing to a circumference of less than seven inches.

Months before the season I had

purchased a dozen snares, crimped on a stop, and J-hooked drowner swivels to the loops. I boiled the snares for 30 minutes with a couple teaspoons of baking soda, and then allowed them to air dry before spraying them with flat black and brown paint. I hoped they would work as well as they looked.

A friend knew a farmer who was having trouble with beavers destroying valuable timber and flooding his pastures. I met with the landowner, who was more than willing to let me try to put a halt to the sudden "urban sprawl." A mid-winter scouting session confirmed the presence of quite a few beavers on his land, and I hoped the spring thaw was only a few weeks away.

Finally, I was on the water — or, more correctly — in the water. I

reached the location I had chosen to make my snare set, which was near the intersection of a small channel and the main body of an almost still-water stream. I thought the open intersection was an ideal location for lovesick beavers to be cruising in February and March, the height of the breeding season.

Fully aware of a beaver's keen sense of smell, I scooped up some mud from the stream bottom and fashioned a mound about a foot away from the water's edge, topping it off with some castoreum. The "pie" was positioned near the channel, and I hoped the "pattie" would elicit a territorial response by causing any passing flat tail to investigate.

To make my set, I cut a stout pole about seven feet in length and shoved it as far as possible into the bottom of the stream. I retrieved it and attached a length of 14-gauge galvanized wire at the top of the mud line on the pole. I wrapped the wire

around it several times and stapled it in place with a bent nail. I again

shoved the wire-attached pole deep into the stream bot-

tom, only this time I

angled it about two and a half feet away from

where I hung the snare. I then cut a dead stake

pole about two feet long, and with the back

of my ax I anchored it securely into the

ground on the shore. A few twists of wire now

held the anchor pole firmly in place on shore

and in the stream's bottom. Another stake was

cut and driven into the hardpan near the snare

support. I cut the slide wire to length, attached

the one-way drowner swivel, and took as much slack as possible



M. GILIO BRUMMETT

out of the slide wire and secured it to the stake. Next, I cut a small snag and firmly pushed it into the mud about seven to eight inches offset from the center location of the snare to act as the snare support. A 10-inch loop is formed and firmly held in place with a pigtail support wire, and then I set the lock at about a two o'clock position, to ensure that the wind would not put the snare out of action. The bottom of the snare is placed about one third of the way in the water, resting on both sides of the approach channel. For added enticement and eye appeal I placed a beaver-chewed piece of wood and some fresh shavings slightly to the right of the castor mound. Finally, I attached a visible numbered tag to the set. I snapped a photo of my handiwork and went to my next three locations, where I laid "steel" instead of hanging "cable."

The next day I cautiously and optimistically peered into the water. I smiled as a trowel-shaped scale-covered tail reflected back at me. I pulled up the nice-size bea-

ver and shook the water from its glossy dark fur. I knew in an instant what I was going to do with this trophy. I would tan it and "hoop" it on a leather-laced white birch to be displayed in my den along with my other trapping firsts.

It's surprising to me that many people, including some trappers, have no idea what a snare is and have little confidence in their ability to use them. Until recently, however, I, too, fell into that category. I departed from the swamp the same way my adventure began — nearly 40 pounds heavier, but this time I felt content shouldering the load. I had accomplished my goal of snaring a beaver in open water.

I spent a week trapping beavers, operating between three and six sets. I caught seven beavers, the largest weighing 54 pounds — my biggest ever — and taken in a snare. I'm looking forward to continuing my journey with snares next spring. □



COVER PAINTING BY GERALD PUTT

YOU GOT 'EM NOW. The "landing gear" is down and those honkers are committed to dropping into the decoys. Concentrate on that telltale white cheekpatch and continue to swing the barrel after you pull the trigger. September is the unofficial beginning of fall for many Keystone State hunters, as that's when the season for resident Canada geese and mourning doves typically opens. Resident Canada geese have become a nuisance in many places — eating crops and fouling beaches and golf courses — so getting permission to hunt them shouldn't be that much of a problem. Many hunters double their fun in September by hunting geese during the morning hours, and then concentrating on doves in the afternoon.

Fawn Survival in Pennsylvania

By Justin Vreeland

Photos by Hal Korber

More than two years ago, about 20 people, including students, wildlife biologists, and a television crew, set out to find deer fawns on Egg Hill in southeastern Centre County. Finally, just before 3 o'clock in the afternoon, one of the crew found a frail looking spotted fawn curled on the forest floor under a hemlock tree. The fawn was quickly and quietly weighed, tagged and outfitted with ear tags and a radio-collar. The day was May 16, 2000, and the fieldwork for the Game Commission's fawn survival study had just begun.

In the April 2001 issue, I reported some results from the first year of the fawn survival study. Since my last article, we conducted another, final year of fawn capture and monitoring. In this article I will cover the major findings from both years.

Predators, hunters, collisions with vehicles and farm machinery, starva-

tion and disease are responsible for fawn deaths. The Game Commission, however, wanted more detailed answers to several questions: What are the major sources of fawn mortality? When and where are fawns most vulnerable? How many fawns survive to their first hunting season or through their first year? To answer those questions with confidence, we needed to catch about 160 fawns.

We chose two sites. The Quehanna Wild Area, on the Allegheny Plateau, in Elk, Clearfield and Cameron counties, and the Penns Valley area, in eastern Centre County, at the northern end of Pennsylvania's Ridge and Valley ecological province. Quehanna is largely a typical eastern oak-hickory-maple forest. All

JUSTIN VREELAND, right, and crew, attaching a radio-collar and ear tags to a fawn as part of the fawn survival study.



the major predators of fawns, including bears, coyotes, bobcats and foxes are present in presumably large numbers. The wild area receives a lot of hunting pressure, especially during the firearm deer season. Aside from a few camps, gas wells, a single business, and a correctional facility on the edge, there are no developed areas in the study site.

The Penns Valley study area actually encompassed Penns Valley, Brush Valley and George's Valley, and the forested mountain ridges and hills bordering the three valleys. Approximately 40 percent of the area is hay fields, pastures and row crops. The rest of the area is small woodlots and forested ridges interspersed with farms and a few small towns and villages. The Penns Valley study area has little public land, and many landowners restrict access. Bears, coyotes and foxes live in and around Penns Valley, but predator densities are probably less than in Quehanna.

To find fawns in Penns Valley, we obtained permission from more than 60 landowners controlling, combined, more than 8,000 acres. Our capture procedure involved organizing eight to ten people in a line and methodically searching fields, reverting pastures and woodlots — anywhere we thought we were likely to find fawns. In Quehanna, foot searches were inefficient. Instead, we searched from vehicles. By this method, we split the crew among several vehicles and canvassed the entire study site several times daily, looking for fawns or does with fawns along roads and trails.

When we captured a fawn it was blindfolded, and then an expandable, break-away radio-collar was placed on it, tags were placed in each ear, and then it was weighed and released. Most captures took only 3 to 5 minutes to process. We used ear tags because we wanted hunters or others who might find a fawn that had shed its collar to be able to report it.

Overall, we captured and radio-collared 218 fawns, more than in any single study

in North America. In 2000, we caught 46 fawns in Quehanna and 52 fawns in Penns Valley; and in 2001, the Quehanna crew caught 62 fawns and the Penns Valley crew, 58. The earliest capture date for either site was that very first fawn caught on May 16, 2000. We caught fawns into the third week in June in both sites in both years. The latest was June 25.

Most fawns captured were less than one week old. Some captured in late May and early June were only a few days old, at most, and did not struggle. But by the second week in June, many of the fawns were large enough or old enough to require a short chase.

The radio-collars enabled us to remotely monitor each fawn's location and survival. By taking a bearing with a directional antenna on a collar (fawn) from one place, moving a short distance down a road and taking another reading on the same collar, and then repeating this a third and sometimes fourth or fifth time within about 10 or 15 minutes, we could estimate each fawn's location, sometimes down to just a few square yards. Over weeks and months, these positions helped us define fawn home ranges, which helped me assess how habitat arrangement and composition influenced fawn survival.

More importantly, monitoring these animals about once daily, but sometimes as often as three times per day, enabled us to quickly learn when a fawn died. The radio-collars used had a switch that changed its signal if the collar remained motionless for more than four hours. When we heard this signal, we would track down the collar and assess any evidence of fawn mortality at the scene.

In some instances, such as vehicle collisions, we knew immediately what killed the fawn. For others, veterinarians at Penn State's Animal Diagnos-

Surviving deer are still wearing ear tags, and some of the fawns captured in 2001 may still be wearing radio-collars. These deer are fair game in the upcoming hunting seasons, provided the bucks meet the new antler restrictions. Although we are not monitoring these animals, we are interested in learning of their fates. If you harvest one, or find one dead, or find a radio-collar or ear tags in the woods, let us know. Contact the Game Commission's Northcentral Region Office, toll free, at 1-877-877-7674.

tics Laboratory performed necropsies. Most of these turned out to be starvation, disease or some other condition that couldn't be diagnosed by just looking at the fawn.

Predation cases were interesting because we performed our own necropsy by skinning the fawn and looking for predator-specific clues on the carcass. Bears, bobcats, coyotes, foxes and domestic dogs all have different ways of killing, eating and caching prey. Although some overlap in these characteristics exists, multiple pieces of evidence often enabled us to identify with reasonable certainty the predators causing most of the predation, and we were able to distinguish killing from scavenging.

We monitored fawns captured in 2000 through their entire first year — until May or June in 2001. The fawns caught in 2001 were monitored through late January or early February 2002 — about eight to nine months from when we captured them. The batteries in some radio-collars have lasted more than two years, and we kept track of some of those deer when we could. However, most of the numbers here are for the 34-week pe-

riod of monitoring in each year that covers fawns from capture through the late hunting seasons in January 2001 and 2002.

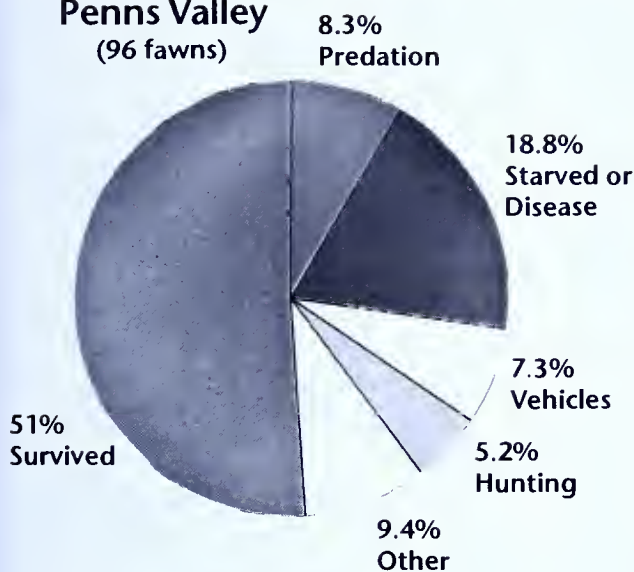
For fawns captured in 2000, 59 percent in Penns Valley survived through the late hunting season, 28 percent in Quehanna. In 2001, 52 percent in Penns Valley and, yes, 52 percent in Quehanna, survived. Because a fair number of fawns had died or lost their collars by January, the total number of animals being monitored at that time was considerably lower than during the capture period in June. So statistically, these survival rates are actually the same, despite the great difference between the low survival in Quehanna in 2000 and higher survival in Penns Valley in both 2000 and 2001 and in Quehanna in 2001.

Of the 218 fawns we radio-collared, 49 (22 percent) were killed by predators. This was the leading source of mortality. However, 84 percent of the predation occurred in Quehanna. Of those 49, we identified the predator involved in 37. Coyotes were responsible for 18; bears, 16; and bobcats three. In Penns Valley, predation was five to coyotes, one to bears and two to unknown predators. In Quehanna, coyotes were responsible for 13 fawn deaths, bears for 15, bobcats for three, and the remaining 10 unknown.

Nearly 50 percent of all predation occurred in June, with 18 percent and 16 percent in July and August. Less than five percent occurred in other months, with no predation in October or April. In Quehanna, during February and March 2001, after the 34-week monitoring period covering the fawns caught in 2000, one fawn was killed by bobcats and another by coyotes. These two deaths were the only known deaths in either site between late January and September for fawns caught in 2000.

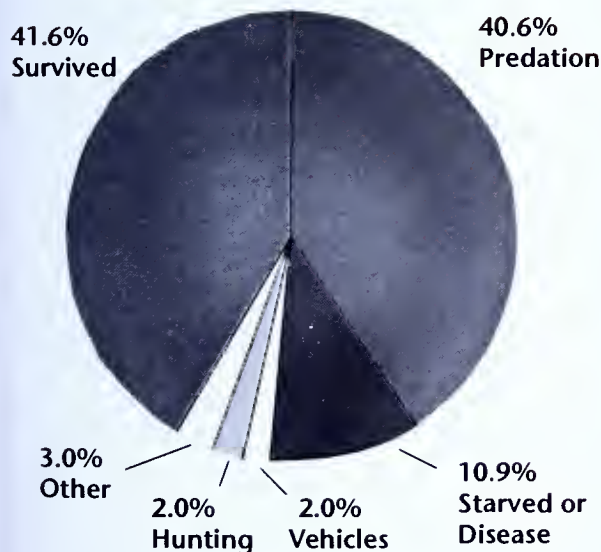
Overall, natural causes of death, excluding predation, were the second leading source of mortality. Most of these were instances of starvation, and they occurred within two or three weeks of birth. Other

Penns Valley (96 fawns)



Fates (through late January 2001 and 2002) of 197 fawns captured in late May through late June in 2000 and 2001 in the Quehanna Wild Area and Penns Valley. Fates of 21 other fawns is unknown.

Quehanna (101 fawns)



fawns died from complications arising from diseases or conditions including diarrhea, leptospirosis, giardia, emphysema, pneumonia and salmonella. Natural causes, excluding predation, were the leading sources of mortality in both years in Penns Valley,

where 59 percent of all such mortalities occurred.

In Quehanna, predators killed fewer fawns in 2001 than in 2000. Bears were responsible for more fawn deaths in 2001 than in 2000, compared to slightly fewer deaths attributed to coyotes in 2001 than in 2000.

A similar trend arose in Penns Valley. Seven of 58 radio-collared fawns died from natural causes, excluding predation, in 2001, compared to 11 of 52 captured fawns in 2000.

As for hunting, in 2000 only one fawn being monitored was taken by a hunter — a junior hunter in Penns Valley. Another fawn had shed its collar in August, and was shot in early December. In 2001, six fawns were taken by hunters. Two were taken in Quehanna, one during the early flintlock season and one during the rifle season. In Penns Valley, one was taken during early archery, one during the early rifle season for junior hunters, and two during rifle season. Despite the 2-week concurrent deer season in 2001, only one more fawn was harvested during the rifle season compared to 2000, when the 3-day antlerless season was still in effect.

Ten fawns captured in 2000 were harvested during the 2001 hunting seasons as yearlings.

These include the first fawn captured for the study and four other does, three of which were tagged in Penns Valley. The six male fawns from 2000 that were harvested in 2001 include a 4-pointer, a 6-pointer, and a 7-pointer — that would have been an

This project was a cooperative study between the Pennsylvania Game Commission and the Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit at Penn State. Literally dozens of people were instrumental in making this study come together. In particular, the many technicians the Game Commission hired made catching and monitoring fawns possible. Also involved were Pennsylvania Game Commission wildlife biologists Bret Wallingford and Dr. Gary Alt, along with Dr. Duane Diefenbach, my advisor and Assistant Unit Leader at the Cooperative Unit. I am a Penn State graduate student using this project to earn my master's degree.

eight, but had broken a tine. The 6-pointer was taken in early archery season about a mile west from where we tagged it. The 4- and the 7-pointers were taken just a few hundred yards apart, but about a mile south from where we tagged them. One other buck had broken both of his main antler beams near the base, but their diameter was larger than the beam diameter of the 6-pointer. These four bucks came from Penns Valley. The other two were shot in Quehanna during the rifle season. One was a spike and the other was a 4-pointer.

Nine fawns were struck by vehicles, and three were struck by haybines. One fawn was poached in Quehanna in each year and one in Penns Valley in 2001. Two fawns in Penns Valley were shot in 2001 for crop damage. Four others died from unknown causes.

One other interesting piece of information we've learned is the movements these young fawns can make. By the ninth week after capture, fawns

maintained home ranges from 25 to 500 acres, averaging about 150 acres. As they got older, their home ranges expanded as they ranged farther.

In both study sites in both years, a few fawns made very long movements that we can't easily explain. Several fawns moved from two to 12 miles from their natal range. Some of these movements were made within two or three weeks, others took only days. Some movements were accomplished before the fawns were two months old, others didn't occur until mid to late fall. In Quehanna, many of these fawns moved off the plateau down into headwater drainages of the Susquehanna or along steep ridges above these drainages. In Penns Valley, several fawns moved back and forth over mountain ridges or across routes 45 and 192.

In conjunction with the home range information we collected, I used a computerized mapping program to quantify landscape characteristics (amount of field versus forested habitat, length of roads, habitat type diversity, and amount of edge habitat) associated with each fawn. None of these landscape characteristics was strongly related to fawn survival, which may mean that the habitat a fawn lives in during its first few months might be less important to its survival than the health of its mother or where it lives in relation to predators.

Now that the fawn survival study has concluded, the Game Commission, again in conjunction with the Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit at Penn State, has begun a study of buck survival and how the new antler restrictions will influence the deer herd. For more on the fawn study and this exciting new study, visit www.pgc.state.pa.us.

Information from these two studies, as well as the fawn conception study and the antler measurement study have and soon will greatly increase our understanding of deer biology and ecology in Pennsylvania and, ultimately, lead to better management of Pennsylvania's deer. □



Oaks and Acorns

By Chuck Fergus

EARLY LAST FALL a neighbor enjoyed watching deer browse in a grassy area near his home, but at some point in October he said he was surprised that the deer had suddenly stopped visiting his field. He wondered why.

The answer lay on the ground in the woods: acorns. All over the mountain, red, black, scarlet, chestnut and white oaks were dropping their autumnal bounty, and it was the most productive acorn year in recent memory.

Hunters and other people interested in wildlife can benefit from knowing their oaks, because their acorns are an important food for many animals.

Botanists separate the oaks into two broad categories: red oaks and white oaks. Prominent among the red oaks in Pennsylvania are northern red oak, black oak, scarlet oak, pin oak and bear oak. Members of the white oak group include white and chestnut oaks, plus the less common

post, yellow and bur oak species. Here's how to tell the two groups apart: The leaves of red oaks are edged with angular lobes ending in "bristle tips," in which the veins jut out beyond the leaf margin as needlelike points. The points may help drain away moisture, thwarting fungal growth that might otherwise cloud the leaf's surface and disrupt photosynthesis, the tree's energy-manufacturing process. In contrast, trees in the white oak group have rounded, flowing perimeters on their leaf lobes, which lack the bristle tips.

In the red oaks, it takes two years for acorns to develop; the acorns are laced with tannins, bitter chemical compounds that deter some foraging animals. White oak acorns ripen in a single growing season (about four

months) and contain fewer tannins, making them more attractive to wildlife.

The acorns of all oaks start off as unobtrusive yellow-green flowers that blossom in May, as the trees' leaves are emerging. In northern red oak, the composite male flowers, called catkins, are usually concentrated in the tree's upper branches; smaller female blossoms emerge on the lower boughs. The dangling male flowers release huge amounts of pollen, which drifts and blows about. The pollen grains land on female flowers, fertilizing them. All of the oaks rely on the wind for fertilization; that's why their flowers appear before the leaves grow large enough to block air currents and interfere with pollination.

Red oak acorns mature at the end of their second growing season; thus an individual tree can potentially bear a nut crop every other year. White oaks produce acorns annually. Nut crops of both groups will fail if a late frost nips the flowers. In autumn, acorns fall just before the leaves come drifting down. The fallen leaves hide some of the acorns from foraging animals, while others remain exposed to attract seed-dispersing wildlife.

Oaks often seem to be in synchrony, with many trees of the same or several species producing bumper

crops in the same year. Scientists don't know how or whether the trees communicate with each other, or if acorn production depends solely on environmental factors. A glut of acorns over-

whelms deer and squirrels, so that some nuts remain unharvested and ultimately sprout. Large acorn crops spur population increases in mice and other rodents; the populations may plummet in succeeding years if acorns are scarce.

Ruffed grouse, wild turkeys, bobwhite quail, woodpeckers, crows, tufted titmice, white-breasted nuthatches, brown thrashers, eastern towhees and

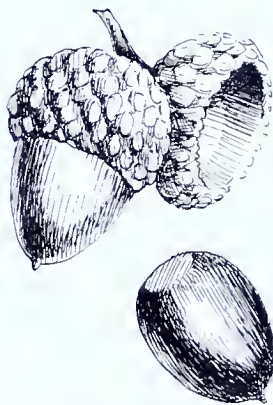
common grackles are among the many birds that eat acorns. The nuthatch uses its beak to hammer the shell open and get at the kernel. The grackle has a hard ridge or keel in the roof of its mouth; the bird rotates an acorn against this

projection to slice through the shell.

Animals readily change their habits and movements to take advantage of the temporary bonanza. Deer bed down in wooded areas and may move only short distances to good acorn sources. Hunters can key in on such patterns, especially in years when only one or a few oak species bear nuts: Find the acorns, and you'll likely find the deer.

One November day I hunted through grape tangles that usually were magnets for grouse, but failed to flush a bird. I then tried a patch of mountain laurel near some chestnut oaks that had dropped plenty of acorns, and was

WHITE OAK



RED OAK



- DOUG PIFER

rewarded with several flushes and managed to bag a grouse. The bird's crop was filled with acorn chunks. The grouse hadn't pecked the acorns apart;

apparently it had been gleaning nuts that deer had broken. Just as mechanical harvesters spill waste grain in fields, feeding whitetails also leave acorn shards on the ground. Kicking some leaves aside, I exposed several of the pale yellow kernel fragments.

I often find extensive areas of the forest floor where wild turkeys have raked away fallen leaves to uncover acorns. Acorns of the chestnut oak are 1 to 1½ inches long and nearly an inch in diameter, yet a turkey can swallow them whole. The bird's gizzard, a muscular sac in the alimentary canal, breaks the nuts up.

Blue jays flock to areas where acorns are plentiful. A jay will load its expandable throat and esophagus with nuts, then fly back to its home territory, up to several miles away. There the bird buries the acorns beneath leaf-duff, soil, or grass, for eating during late winter or early spring. Acorns that jays fail to recover (and that squirrels do not dig up and steal) germinate and may become new trees.

Because jays are good at selecting only sound nuts — ones that haven't been parasitized by insects — they end up planting a lot of oaks. Because jays are more mobile than squirrels, they may be even more important as tree planters. Scientists believe that jays' transporting and burying of acorns helped the different

oak species march northward following the last Ice Age, around ten thousand years ago, at which time the oaks had withdrawn into what are now the southeastern states. Nut dispersal by blue jays remains important today, especially where patches of woods have become fragmented by cropland, housing developments and roads — areas that can block the movements of seed-dispersing mammals such as squirrels. Jays help maintain the species'

genetic diversity by transferring acorns between fragmented patches of forest.

When red oak and white oak acorns lay side-by-side, squirrels tend to eat the white oak acorns immediately (presumably because they don't taste as bitter as red oak acorns) and bury the red oak acorns for future use. Given the choice, deer select the less tannic, sweeter-tasting nuts of chestnut and white oaks, even though acorns from the red oak group have a higher fat content.

Bears gorge on acorns to build up fat that will sustain them

during their winter hibernation. Our extensive oak forests often yield prolific acorn crops, and as a result, Pennsylvania's bears are among the largest, healthiest, and most reproductively successful black bears in North America.

Pin oak's Latin name, *Quercus palustris*, signals its preferred habitat: palustral, or swampy, land. (*Palustris*

SCRUB OAK



CHESTNUT OAK



SCARLET OAK



refers to a bog or marsh.) The rounded acorns of this species are about half an inch long. Mallards and wood ducks walk on land bordering marshes, picking up the nuts. Blue jays may cache pin oak acorns in the ragged seed heads of cattails.

Because they lack a tannin defense, acorns of white and chestnut oaks germinate quickly. Before winter weather freezes the ground, their first small roots have penetrated the soil, with shoots remaining dormant until the following spring. On November 15 I picked 20 chestnut oak acorns from beneath a tree I can see out my office window. Nineteen of the acorns had sent a reddish, white-tipped rootlet plunging up to three inches into the dry, hard-packed soil. Acorns in the red oak group do not germinate until spring.

Oaks invest valuable resources in their nutrient-loaded nuts. Other trees — birches, for example — use a different strategy. They bear many thousands of tiny seeds, each of which carries little in the way of food reserves. Lightweight birch seeds get blown far and wide by the

Chuck Fergus is the author of 10 books, including *Wildlife of Pennsylvania* and *Thornapples*; the latter is drawn from columns published in *Game News*, *Audubon*, and *Country Journal* magazines. Both books are available from the Game Commission. Check out the agency's website at www.pgc.state.pa.us for these books and others that are available.

wind, and they need to land on moss or bare ground so their roots can immediately provide the growing plant with nutrients.

Acorns aren't as mobile as birch seeds, but they supply their seedlings with more energy to get a start in life, and oaks aren't slouches when it comes to producing nuts. In Virginia, botanists found that a single large white oak bore more than 60,000 acorns in one year. The tree was 69 years old, 69 feet tall, and had a trunk diameter of 25 inches. Typical good production for a forest-grown tree is probably more like 10,000 acorns. Multiply that by 20 trees — a typical number for a forested acre — and you come up with 200,000 acorns. No wonder wildlife and woods-wise hunters stick close to the oaks in autumn. □

Books in Brief

(Not available from the Game Commission.)

Natural Pennsylvania, by Charles Fergus, Stackpole Books, 5067 Ritter Road, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055-6921, www.stackpolebooks.com, 210 pp., \$18.95 plus \$4 shipping & handling, PA residents add 6% sales tax. This book is a must for those outdoor enthusiasts wanting to explore state forest natural areas, and definitely motivates readers to visit the state's unique natural places of beauty. With the keen eye of a lifelong naturalist and practiced pen of an experienced writer, the author gives a guided tour of the Keystone State's 61 designated natural areas, which are some of the state's wildest and most distinctive natural places. "Walk" with the author through century-old hemlock groves, canyons with waterfalls tumbling down rocky slopes, wilderness spots with nesting bald eagles, and even a pocket of pin oaks near a bustling city.

Field Care of Venison

By Jerry Chiappetta

THERE IS NO magic recipe that will improve venison to make up for improper field care. This is the main message from master chef Milos Cihelka in a series of videos now offered by the Game Commission.

Here are just a few of the chef's important tips from a 90-minute video "Big Game: Field to Table:"

Deer must be field-dressed as soon as possible after the kill. Quick field-dressing facilitates cooling and prevents spoiling when the danger of the meat turning sour is especially high. This is especially critical during the warmer weather of the early bowhunting and muzzleloader seasons.

When back at camp or home, the deer's body cavity should be flushed with cold water and the cavity examined to be sure all entrails were removed.

For the first day, the animal should be hung head up for proper drainage. Skinning should not be done at this time, because it would only cause dehydration and serve no good purpose. Whenever possible, age your deer with the skin on.

If your game is caribou, moose or elk, it's best to quarter these animals right on the spot and hang the quarters in trees to cool. Get the quarters to a cool (42 degrees Fahrenheit) facility for aging.

Aging Big Game

Most hunters have their game processed, or do it themselves, as soon as they get it home. This virtually assures tough, unpleasant tasting meat. It's no wonder some people dislike the taste of wild game.

Even the best prime beef is tough if not aged properly. Soon after the animal is

killed, rigor mortis sets in, and it takes about five days for the muscles to relax again. Through the action of enzymes, which are present in the meat, aging tenderizes the meat and enhances the flavor. The warmer the temperature, the faster the enzymes act, along with bacteria, which can spoil the meat.

Best Temperatures For Aging

The best temperature for aging a big game animal is between 34 and 40 degrees, with low humidity and adequate ventilation. Your garage, barn or other large outbuilding can be quite suitable for this, even if the outside temperature rises above 50 degrees during the day or drops below freezing at night.

To age venison, hang it with the head down and with the skin on. Place newspapers or a five-gallon bucket under the snout to catch the drainage. Cut the chest down to the neck and insert a stick to keep the cavity open. Remember, the warmer the temperature, the faster the aging process. In extremely warm weather, you may not be able to age a deer more than three days. If the temperature climbs above 50 degrees F, place frozen plastic water jugs inside the cavity.

Check the cavity every few days by touching it to make sure it remains dry. Should any slime develop, wipe it off with a towel moistened with vinegar. As long as the cavity stays dry, there will be no problem, even when white specks of mold appear. This is normal.

Under ideal conditions, with a walk-in cooler, for example, a young deer should hang for two weeks. A mature deer should hang for three weeks in such a cooler, but even five days to one week of aging in a garage or barn will greatly improve the flavor and tenderness. Should you discover any fly larva infestation, take the deer outside and hose out the infested

area with water. Trim the tissue around the infestation, then sanitize it with vinegar. If an objectionable odor remains, trim more. Butcher the deer soon afterwards.

Easy Hunting Camp Recipes

While Chef Milos strongly recommends proper aging of all wild game animals, there are several tasty dishes you can prepare immediately.

Liver, heart and tenderloins can be prepared the same day an animal is harvested. The liver should be examined carefully for any diseases, and don't look for a gall bladder; deer don't have them.

To prepare the heart, first rinse it thoroughly and trim all fat. Split open the chambers and then cut away all sinew. Press the heart flat and slice into 1/3-inch thick slices. Season the cuts with salt and pepper and coat with a little vegetable oil. Cook the same as you would a steak — medium rare to medium — not well done or it will be tough as shoe leather.

For the liver, rinse and skin it. Next, remove all the large veins and slice the liver into 1/3-inch thick pieces. Again, season with salt and pepper, moisten with vegetable oil and cook until medium rare or medium.

These time-tested game handling techniques and recipes will provide you with a bonus after your next hunting adventure. Following these suggestions in field-dressing, game handling, and preparing venison will add immeasurably to your next wild harvest. Good hunting and may your time spent in the kitchen provide you with more enjoyable cooking and eating.

Marinades

Following are tips on marinades from chef Cihelka in his 80-minute video called "Venison: Healthy & Tasty."

Game is marinated for three reasons: to tenderize, flavor and preserve. Basic types of marinades are raw and cooked.

Raw marinades are used for shorter time marination of smaller pieces. Cooked mari-

STIR FRY TENDERLOINS

(4 Servings)

Here is a quick and simple dish to prepare using fresh tenderloins:

4 c trimmed, tender tenderloin, cut into 1/2-inch thick slices

3 Tbsp vegetable oil — peanut or olive are best

2 c sliced onions

2 c sliced red and green peppers

2 c sliced mushrooms

2 Tbsp finely chopped garlic

4 Tbsp soy sauce

2 Tbsp dry red wine
pepper to taste.

Have all ingredients at hand. Pre-heat a large skillet or wok to smoking hot. Add oil and spread meat over the bottom in one layer without crowding. You may have to do this in two or more batches, if necessary, making sure you reheat the pan every time before adding meat.

Sear the meat over high heat on one side, turn over and brown the other side. This should not take more than 20 seconds, and the meat must remain rare. Remove meat from pan. Add more oil if necessary and put the vegetables, mushrooms and garlic in and sauté until heated throughout. Season with pepper, soy sauce and wine. Return meat to skillet, stir up and serve immediately, accompanied by rice, noodles or bread.

RAW MARINADE #1

(For venison, bison, rabbits or hares)

1 qt sliced carrots
1 c crushed black peppercorns
1 qt sliced root celery
1 qt sliced onions
1/4 c crushed allspice berries
1 1/2 qt dry white wine
1/2 qt cider vinegar
1/4 c crushed juniper berries
1/4 c thyme leaves
1/4 c bay leaves
1/4 c coriander

nades are for longer marination of larger pieces.

Caution Regarding Marinades

Marinades are to be used only once, although some (Raw #1 and Cooked) could be used twice, in which case a little more vinegar should be added to counterbalance dilution caused by meat juices. Parts of most marinades are used in sauce prepara-

tions, but caution must be exercised so that the sauce does not get too acidic.

Mix all together in a stainless pot. Never marinate in aluminum. Place a layer of vegetables/spice on the bottom, then the meat, layering with more vegetable and spice mix. Pour the remainder over the top, cover and refrigerate. Turn over daily; use 2-3 days.

Use plastic or ceramic glass containers. For larger pieces, use heavy plastic bags.

Cooked Marinade

Basically the same as the above, except cook the vegetables in oil until tender without browning them, then add the rest to it. Replace wine with water and the formula is 50 percent water and 50 percent vinegar. Then let cool completely before adding the meat. Marinate up to 10 days. □

WILD GAME CARE & COOKING VIDEOS

The Game Commission, in cooperation with Wild Harvest Videos, is pleased to offer six videos designed to help you get the most from your deer and other wild game harvests. Produced by Jerry Chiappetta and featuring Certified Master Chef Milos Cihelka, these videos demonstrate step-by-step how to clean, butcher and care for your game and transform it into delicious, healthy meals.

Videos:

Big Game: Field to Table: 90 minutes; if you want to butcher a deer, this is the video for you.

Venison: Healthy and Tasty: 80 minutes.

Venison: Aging, Smoking & Sausage Making: 55 minutes.

Care & Cooking Game Birds & Small Game Animals: 75 minutes.

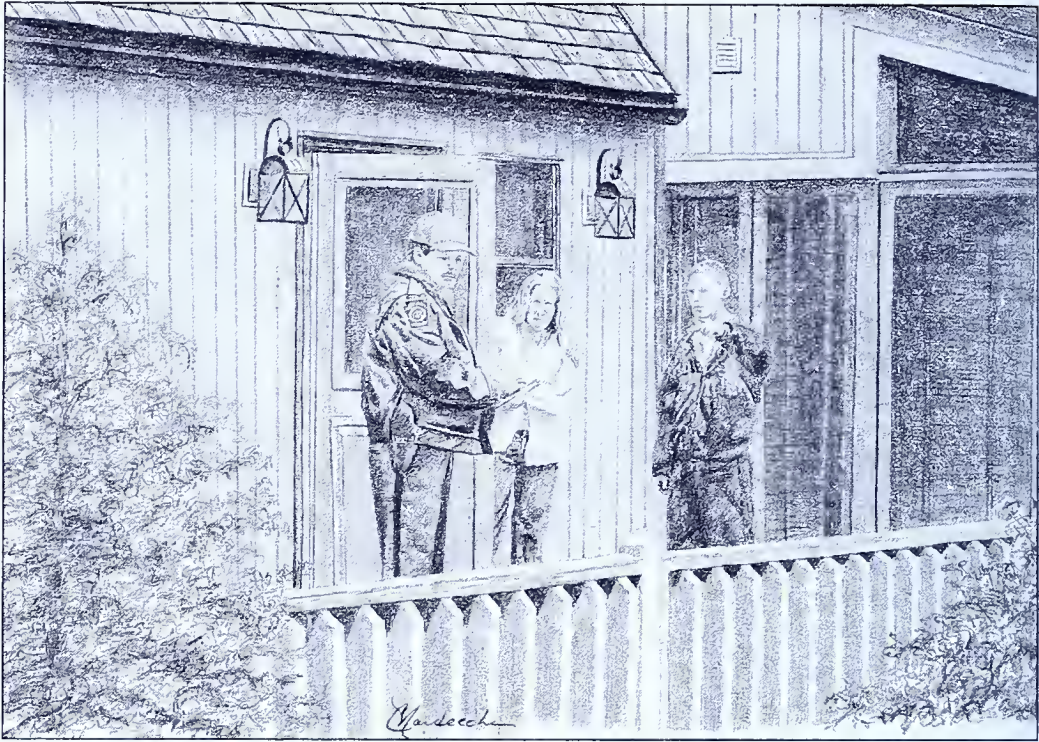
Care & Cooking Upland Game Birds: 75 minutes.

Care & Cooking Waterfowl: 75 minutes.

Shipping & Handling

\$1.00 to \$6.00 = \$1.25
\$6.01 to \$20.00 = \$2.95
\$20.01 to \$35.00 = \$4.95
\$35.01 to \$60.00 = \$6.95

Tapes are \$9.95 each, plus s&h. PA residents add 6% state sales tax. Order from "The Outdoor Shop," at www.pgc.state.pa.us, by writing The Pennsylvania Game Commission, Dept. MS, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797, or by calling 1-888-888-3459.



The Crop Kill

By Mario L. Piccirilli
Forest County WCO

IT WAS a beautiful Indian summer day, with the leaves dressed in their fall array of reds, yellows and golds. The fall turkey and archery seasons were underway, and while traveling home from the southern end of my district in, back then, Butler County, I got a radio call from the region office instructing me to call an individual who had information about an illegal deer kill. After the caller had briefed me on the situation, I told him that Deputy Francis Bodema and I would be right over.

I called Francis on the radio, met him and proceeded to the home of the informant, Mr. Satchel. On the way, I was filling Fran in on the particulars and mentioned the suspect's name, Slim. Francis looked over at me and

said, "Slim, we know him and this isn't his first violation." We proceeded up a long, steep dirt road to Mr. Satchel's residence. We met Mr. Satchel and his wife on their porch, and Mr. Satchel told us that two days earlier Slim had been bragging about how he was going to kill a deer illegally, say it was a crop kill, and get one over on the Game Commission.

The next day, Mr. Satchel saw Slim drive his truck into a field behind his house about 4 p.m., heard a shot just before dark, and then saw Slim driving out of the field with his truck lights off. I asked him if he could give us an idea where Slim might have been hunting. He said that he knew where there were a couple of treestands along the edge of the woods that borders the fields behind his property. Before we left to check the area, Mr. Satchel advised

us that Slim had a reputation for being difficult, and that the locals try to avoid him. "Be careful walking in, he might be in one of the treestands watching you."

After thanking him for the information, Fran and I hiked several hundred yards to the top of the fields along the woods line. We then dropped down to a secluded field bordered by woods on three sides. I discovered four treestands along the edge of the far woodlot that gave way to a valley below.

Walking back, I looked up and at the other end of the field and saw Francis waving to me. Fran had found another tree-stand that was near a gut pile, and after checking it, we determined it was from a buck. The deer was not shot on the property Slim had permission to be, but on the adjoining property. With the light fading, we hurried to collect evidence. While leaving the area we passed an overgrown junkyard, and quickly noticed someone watching us from behind a junked car. When the individual realized we saw him looking at us he shouted, "Hey, who are you guys and what are you doing?"

"State officers, Pennsylvania Game Commission," I responded.

It was Mr. Crafter, who owned the junkyard, and he wanted to know what was going on. I informed him that we were investigating an illegally killed deer on his property. "I don't allow people to hunt on my property without permission and I didn't give anyone permission lately."

On our way out we met Deputy Scott Klopfer, who also spoke to Mr. and Mrs. Satchel. We filled him in on what we had and made plans to visit Mr. Rook, who owned the farm where Slim was supposed to be hunting, and Slim. We arrived at Mr. Rook's old farmhouse. A dim light in the kitchen was the only light. Walking onto the porch I almost fell through a large hole in the rotted wood. We proceeded to the back door, and it was apparent that no one was home.

When we arrived at Slim's place three

growling dogs greeted us as we stood on the outside of a low fence that surrounded the residence. No one came to the door, even though lights were on in the house and a vehicle was parked out front. I called Slim on my cell phone and left a message for him to call me, and told him I needed to see the head and carcass of the buck he had killed. Just before I got home, around 9 p.m., the dispatcher radioed me to call Slim at his residence. When I returned the call Slim answered, "Whaddya want?" I told him I needed to see the head and hide of the buck he had killed. "Why do you need to see the deer?" he boomed over the phone.

"Because you shot it illegally, and according to section 2321 of the Game and Wildlife Code, you must surrender it," I said.

"Well, I shot it with a bow and it was a crop kill."

I asked him when he could meet me to check the deer, and he told me to come over the following morning.

The next morning I was dispatched to another incident, so I called Fran and Scott to meet Slim. When they arrived at Slim's no one was there. Slim's old Jeep was parked off the roadway and had blood and deer hair all over the tailgate. As they were standing at his front door, an old truck pulled into the driveway and Slim stepped out from the passenger side. Mr. Rook was driving and just sat in the truck and glared at Scott and Fran. "What are you guys doin' here?" Slim asked.

"We're here to pick up that illegal buck you shot."

"I shot that deer for a crop kill!" he bellowed.

"Listen, Slim, we know you killed that deer illegally. We have two witnesses who saw you go in and drive back out. We also know you didn't

shoot the deer with a bow."

Slim began shouting, "You tell me right now who saw me. Tell me now!"

Scott advised Slim that that was confidential information. Slim lowered his head for a few moments then said, "What's this gonna cost me?"

"What rifle did you shoot the deer with?" Scott asked.

"My .22 magnum that I was hunting turkeys with," Slim replied.

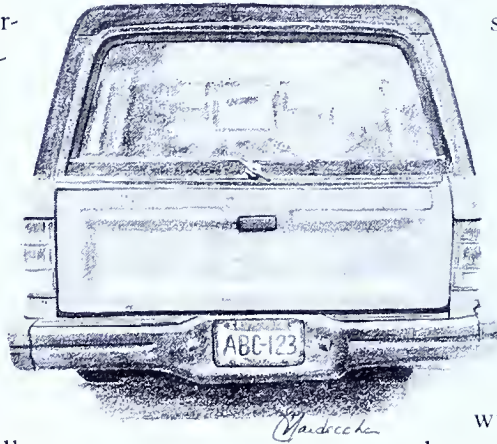
"You're not allowed to use a rifle to hunt turkeys in this zone, Slim, and you know that."

"But I didn't shoot any turkeys."

"Yes, but you're still not allowed to use a rifle for turkeys in this zone."

Scott and Fran confiscated the rifle for evidence, and asked Slim to produce the head, hide and meat. Slim said that Mr. Rook had the deer. Fran asked Mr. Rook, who was now standing by the truck, to retrieve the deer. Mr. Rook said that he was not going to turn over any deer meat, insisting that the deer was shot on his property

by Slim, who works for him, for damaging crops. Fran told Mr. Rook that the deer was not shot on his property, but on Mr. Crafter's property. When Mr. Rook was told that he could be charged \$500 plus court costs for possession of an illegally killed deer, he promptly retrieved the head, hide and meat and turned it over to Scott and Fran.



Slim was charged for shooting and possessing an illegal deer and for using a .22 magnum rifle to shoot the deer, as it's a prohibited firearm for big game. He was fined \$650 and lost his hunting privileges for one year.

He also was issued a written warning for hunting turkeys with a rifle in a turkey management zone where rifles are not permitted. Mr. Rook was issued a written warning for possessing an illegally killed deer.

A single phone call from a witness and a little information can go a long way for wildlife conservation officers in making a good case to protect our wildlife. Without the public's help in conserving our natural resources, all Pennsylvanians would lose out. □

Hunters Get HIP!

If you hunt migratory birds such as waterfowl, doves and woodcock, you must be HIP-certified. Be sure to purchase your Migratory Game Bird License (HIP permit) before pursuing migratory birds.



By Robert A. Gratson

SOMETHING HAPPENED during the last week of the 1997 season that would test my knowledge and skill for the next two years. I had been hunting on SGL 51 in Fayette County, and after an uneventful day I started back to my truck about a mile away. As I walked down an old overgrown logging road, I heard a grunt, so I stopped to listen. Just then a deer stepped from an overgrown clearcut onto the road and stood 12 yards in front of me. I was shocked and dumfounded when I saw its massive high rack. The buck disappeared as quickly as he had appeared.

With only a few days left in the season, I figured I had no chance of being able to pattern this animal. The encounter had been so close to my ladder stand, however, that if I moved it, I thought I just might see him again.

I was in the stand at the new location the following afternoon, and at three o'clock a small 4-point and three does came past, followed by a 7-point. I could have taken the 7-point, but decided to pass. I figured the big buck was around, because the smaller bucks were nervous. My hunch

was right, because a half hour before sunset the big buck from the previous night materialized. He came within 20 yards and offered a perfect shot. I came to full draw, put the pin behind his shoulder, held my breath and released. I heard a thud and thought I had made a fatal hit, but after checking where the deer had been standing, I noticed my arrow stuck in a stump. To this day I can't figure out how I missed. I hunted for the remaining three days of the season but never saw the buck again. On the final evening of archery season I took a nice 8-point, but I couldn't get the trophy buck out of my mind.

When rifle season came around, I took my grandfather to the area, and while he passed up several smaller bucks, we never spotted the big one. I figured someone else had gotten him, but on the second day of the antlerless season I saw him again. I had placed my grandfather in a hollow, while I hiked in to an old homestead that had a thick crabapple thicket near it. The old farm sits in the middle of a giant saddle, not far from the clearcut where

I had seen the big buck. Shortly after daybreak I began still-hunting the ridge near the crabapple thicket when I noticed buck rubs on trees 10 inches in diameter. The trees had been deeply gouged and the rubs were at least three feet off the ground. I knew a huge buck had made them, "my" buck. While I was examining the rubs a big doe wandered by and I filled my tag. After tagging and field-dressing the deer, I drug it down to a game lands road and met my grandfather.

After stowing the doe and my rifle in the truck, I had my grandfather drop me back off up at the old farm road. I poked around, hoping to move some deer down to him in the hollow. It took me 20 minutes to reach the old homestead, and I was just zigzagging

through the fields and thickets when I jumped four does. They headed up the hill instead of down the hollow, so I made a big circle to the top of a knob to cut them off and push them back down to my grandfather. When I reached the top I noticed two giant pines and a couple of old rusted cars about 40 yards in front of me, and I was about to turn around when a flicker of movement near the pines caught my eye. I studied the spot through my binoculars, and couldn't believe my eyes when the trophy buck stood up and just stood there staring at me. Through my high-power binoculars I finally got a real good look at him. He had a typical 8-point rack, but the mass and height were impressive. I had taken some nice bucks, but this one had at least 5½-inch thick bases, and was nearly as thick all the way up to his long G3 tines (the third tine off the main beam). The incredible buck just ambled off without even raising his tail. That was the end of the 1997 season for me.

All that winter I scouted the area and studied trails and sign but never saw the buck again until March. I took a hunting buddy out to the locations where I saw the deer and what I thought was his sign. We felt that with our combined experience and effort we might be able to pattern him. As we poured over my notes and maps, I showed him the areas where I saw the deer, and we were able to come up with a plan. We walked the route and a pattern became evident, as we found a series of rubs, scrapes and lone beds. About halfway through the route we ran into a giant scrape in the middle of the crabapple



thicket. While examining it I noticed something in the Y of a tree. It turned out to be a shed antler that unquestionably had belonged to the trophy buck. We knew we were on the right track.

I didn't see the buck again until the summer, but then I began seeing him fairly regularly, as he was unmistakably larger than all other bucks in the area. I frequently saw him in the fields in the early morning hours during the beginning of September, and had his travel routine down fairly well. It was just a waiting game until archery season opened, but I knew I would have to get him early because he would change his pattern as the season progressed.

The first day of the 1998 archery season finally arrived, and I was in my treestand near a trail that the buck had been using to exit the field he had been frequenting during the summer. I knew I was in the right spot because at dawn a 6-point and forkhorn that were always in the field near the big buck passed within 17 yards. Twenty minutes later I saw movement to my right about 75 yards away, and I knew immediately it was the one.

He was cautiously zigzagging my way, and I was delighted that the wind was in my face. Things changed in a hurry, however, when he stopped about 50 yards out and bedded down. I was a wreck. What do I do now? I waited until mid-morning and he never budged. I was desperate, so I grabbed my grunt tube and softly grunted just once; the buck just stood up and walked away. I was crushed.

Three weeks went by before I saw him again. I changed locations, and one evening I was set up where I had been seeing a lot of does, figuring with the ap-

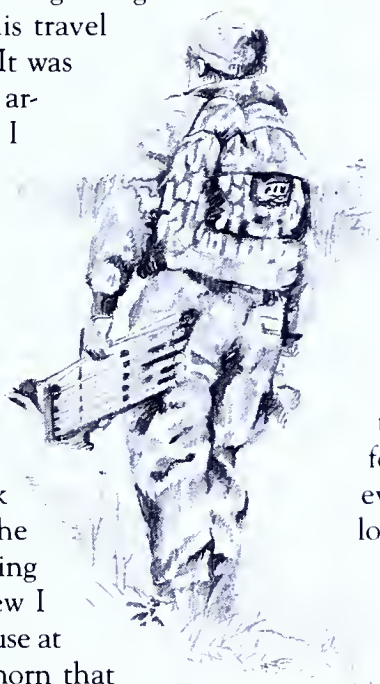
proaching rut he might be hanging around. The buck never showed, but while walking a field back to my truck I spotted him in a patch of woods. He spotted me, too, and was gone in a flash.

The next morning I was back in the same stand, and at 7:30 I noticed a buck I had never seen before chasing a smaller buck. He was a beautiful

10-point with a wide rack, and I decided that if he gave me a shot I'd take it. He stopped at 25 yards and I slipped an arrow into his lungs. I was glad I took the deer, because it was my largest buck. The rack has 10 points with five kickers coming off the right base — truly a trophy animal. My quest for the big 8-point, however, was not over, not by a long shot.

I still had an antlerless deer license, so I spent every free minute searching for a mature doe. On the

next to last day of the archery season a big doe came running down a fencerow right under my stand. She acted nervous, and then right behind her, grunting and snort-wheeling, came my bruiser buck. He chased her right around my tree and stopped 10 yards away. The doe looked right at me when I drew my bow, but it was hard to concentrate on her because of the buck. I managed to place an arrow right behind her shoulder, though, and she went only 35 yards before piling up. The buck just walked away, turning around every so often to look back. That was the final straw. I made up my mind right then and there that if he made it through the season, I'd



S.P. Wilson

hunt for him only the next season.

During the summer of 1999 I scouted for the big buck every chance I got, but didn't spot him until August 23. It was a foggy morning, and I was near the crabapple orchard when I noticed the silhouette of a deer out of the corner of my eye. Twenty feet away, and totally unaware of my presence, stood my buck. He was already as big as the previous year, but now had a kicker off his G2 — second point off the main beam. He looked even more massive in velvet. I knelt down and watched him feeding along until he was out of sight. I was overwhelmed with joy, knowing he was still alive and in the area. I tried to get a better fix on his routine, but he had changed. After that day he went completely nocturnal. I saw him five times after that encounter while spotlighting with my family, but then he disappeared. I figured he went nocturnal because of my presence. I knew I had to get him during the upcoming season or he would move out of the area.

When the 1999 archery season opened I was confident, but that changed as I saw buck after buck, but not "my" buck. I figured he was long gone. On November 6, however, I was walking into the area where I had seen him with the doe that I killed the year before, and I spotted him chasing two does back and forth. I knelt down and tried every call I had to turn him my way, but to no avail. All I could do was watch them go off into the woods and disappear, but I was delighted to see him again.

I returned to the area on November 10, which was a cold rainy morning, but I had a confident feeling from the moment I climbed out of bed. I headed across the field to my stand, and as I crested the top of a hill in the middle of the field I noticed a bunch of deer about 150 yards away, and one was running around chasing the does. Through my binoculars I could see that it was the big buck. I figured I would try to head to the corner of the field where the does seemed to heading, and I made it there without spooking the deer. I stood by an old beech tree, and not long after the does filed right past me within 10 yards.

I heard a grunt and my quest of two years ran by at 25 yards but did not offer a shot. He stopped about 40 yards away and pawed a scrape. I grunted once on my grunt tube and he jerked his head up and took a couple steps closer. I then called once on a bleat call and he came charging right towards me. He stood seven yards away, totally unaware of my presence, but I didn't have a chance to draw the bow. Luckily, however, when he reached the spot where the does had gone through earlier, he stuck his nose to the ground on some scent, which allowed me to come to full draw. I put my sight pin behind his shoulder, but then my arrow slipped off the rest. With the buck now staring at me, I managed to do a quick grunt and wiggled the arrow back onto the rest. He turned just as I released and the arrow hit him in the neck, severing his spine. The buck dropped without taking another step. He weighed 203 pounds and scored an impressive 148 $\frac{3}{8}$ net B&C points. It's quite a rack, having just 8 points with one kicker on the G2 and $6\frac{3}{8}$ -inch bases. My 2-year quest had ended, and it was a hunt I'll never forget. □

Education is the instruction of the intellect in the laws of Nature, under which name I include not merely things and their forces, but men and their ways; and the fashioning of the affections and of the will into an earnest and loving desire to move in harmony with those laws.

~ T.H. Huxley

Wildlife Education, Courtesy of the PGC

By Larissa Rose

PGC Information Writer

Photos by the author

WILDLIFE EDUCATION received a boost lately, because of recently developed Department of Education standards that require the teaching of Pennsylvania environment and ecology in our public schools. (See this month's editorial.) The Game Commission, however, has been active in Pennsylvania wildlife education for decades.

One program in particular was started in 1983 called Project WILD. This is a national program designed to teach teachers — and other educators — how to teach wildlife concepts in their classrooms. This program is unique because the lessons can be integrated into science, art, social studies — all disciplines in all grade levels. Each lesson, or activity, tells which grade levels and subject areas it is designed for. The lessons deal with Ecological Knowledge, Social and Political Knowledge, and Sustaining Fish and Wildlife Resources. Through Project WILD, the Game Commission trains a core group of Project WILD facilitators, who then train other educators. Since its start in Pennsylvania, more than 300 facilitators have held

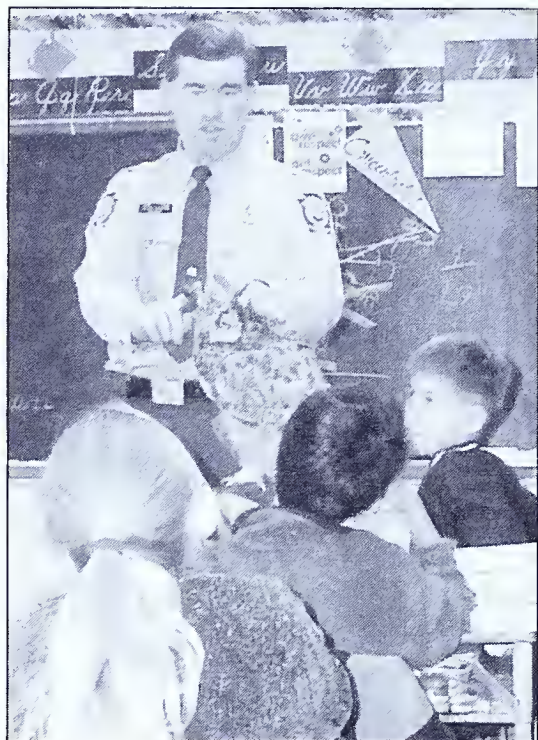
workshops for thousands of educators, impacting hundreds of thousands of students.

The Game Commission's wildlife education efforts got a tremendous boost in 1993, when six regional wildlife education positions were created. These individuals work directly with schools in their regions, and also train and support wildlife conservation officers in their efforts to work with schools in their districts.

The wildlife education supervisors/specialists (WES) and WCOs present programs on everything from animal tracks and songbirds to habitat needs and biodiversity, to classes of all ages. The goal is to have unbiased, factual information about wildlife presented in a fun way, so that students enjoy learning about Pennsylvania's environment.

The Game Commission has had tremendous support from conservation and sportsmen's groups. For example, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation recently provided funds to put together an Elk Education display at the Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area visitors center.

The Eastern Chapter of the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep has provided money to put together kits for WCOs to use to teach students about wildlife



Part of a WES's job is to give presentations at schools in his region. Here WES DAN LYNCH teaches a class about predator-prey relationships.

forensics. The kits, known as Pennsylvania Wildlife Crime Scene Investigations, will be used to demonstrate nine hands-on tests that can be done in the classroom to focus on solving wildlife crimes.

The Lehigh Valley Chapter of Safari Club International and their Sables (SCI's women's auxiliary) chapter gave six Urban Wildlife Educational grants to create kits containing pelts, skulls, tracks, scat, books, videos, posters and lesson plans for teachers to use in their classrooms. SCI Sables International is working with the Game Commission to create a "Safari in a Box" program. Each "box" will contain pelts, skulls and other educational materials for teachers to use to teach about wildlife.

The National Wild Turkey Federation's Local #1 Chapter (the first chapter in the country), has made donations to our Southwest Region's educational efforts. The chapter has

provided every WCO and Land Manager in the region with a turkey hunting education box. Each box contains an activity book, posters, turkey cutouts, wildlife notes, turkey feet and turkey feathers. There are also several loaner kits at the region office that teachers can borrow to use in their classrooms.

Each WES has programs and highlights unique to his region. Each has the freedom to create his own programs, many of which are tailored to his area. In the Northwest, WES Kevin Thompson is gathering various types of bird nests, placing them in protective plastic cubes, and using them to teach students about the many nesting strategies of birds.

In the Southwest, WES Joe Stefko has students involved in many different activities. A huge project is the bluebird box program, which all WCOs in the region are presenting at schools in their districts.

The program has students construct 50 bluebird boxes, then place their school logo, which they design, on the boxes. The kids also sign the boxes on the inside. According to Stefko, having a personal interest in the boxes helps cut down on vandalism. "The kids kind of police the boxes," he says. Plus, some of the schools have the box locations logged in a Global Positioning System, so students have the opportunity to use the GPS units to find the boxes to check on them.

So far, boxes have been placed along bicycle and hiking trails, as well as along 24 miles of the Turnpike in Westmoreland and Fayette counties. The Allegheny Trail Alliance recently approved a proposal to allow the students to put boxes along the Allegheny Trail, which will run from Pittsburgh to Washington, D.C. About 1,000 boxes will be placed between Pittsburgh and the Maryland border.

Every WCO in the Southwest has his or her own pelt kit to use in the schools. There used to only be one per county, which Stefko said kept many from doing programs. "Now that they have these avail-



Wildlife Conservation Education Specialist THERESA ALBERICI (far right) leads teachers in the "Oh Deer!" activity at a "Wild About Deer" workshop at Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area. The activity is designed to teach fifth through eighth graders about food, water and shelter as three essential components of habitat, and population fluctuations as a result of those factors.

able to them, they're doing more programs than ever before," he says.

The Game Commission's "Wildlife of Pennsylvania" coloring book is used in thousands of classrooms each year. The activity book teaches younger students about Pennsylvania's birds and mammals in a fun way, and a Spanish version was recently printed.

In 1998, the Game Commission collaborated with Audubon Society and Pennsylvania State Parks to create a curriculum supplement about songbirds. All three organizations sell the text to teachers, who may take a workshop to learn how to use it. The Game Commission is currently coordinating efforts to create materials for educators to teach about biodiversity in Pennsylvania. The new curriculum has been introduced to teachers in workshops, allowing them to offer their input into the process.

The number of students reached continues to grow each year. During the 2001-02 school year, programs were presented at around 2,000 schools, with more than 120,000 students participating. Many of

these were urban kids who might not otherwise be introduced to wildlife.

While a great deal of work is done in the classrooms, the Game Commission also reaches out to youngsters in many other ways. Youth Field Days are held every summer in nearly every county in Pennsylvania, with thousands of kids participating.

Each year, nearly 40,000 students 11 years old and up attend Hunter-Trapper Education courses. Conservation Camps are held for a week each summer in 20 counties throughout the state. And countless numbers of students make field trips to the learning centers at Pymatuning and Middle Creek Wildlife Management Areas, where they are taught about wildlife in the area, and participate in various field activities.

And all of the education that the Game Commission is doing is definitely paying off. According to WES Joe Stefko, "The more people we touch, the better for wildlife and for hunters." □

The Steadfast Hunter

Penn's Woods Sketchbook / Bob Sopchick



HE SOLEMN RIVER was black as polished marble and moved without expression. The shorelines were rimmed with ice, and the bordering cattails wore turbans of fresh snow.

He had to cross the river, but the arched stone railroad bridge with its pedestrian catwalk was gone. Sections of the arch lay in the river, the graffiti on it broken into syllables; *Ra, Lo, Che, Na*, like a lost Algonquian language.

He tried to remember if they had ever crossed at another place, but he had not been here for more than 20 years and couldn't recall. He walked far upstream, stopping every few yards to gauge the depth, but the river channel ran deep, and the mountain opposite posed a sheer wall that he could not scale. He wandered downstream, but here the river widened and gathered volume where it was joined by a feeder creek.

Back at his truck he took some plastic trash bags, bungee cords and rope from a storage box and put them in his pack and returned to the bridge. From a weed patch he lifted a double length of yellow handrail left from the catwalk. The railing was 10 feet long, and welded every few feet with a cross brace, like a ladder. It was sturdy, and would hold his weight.

He tied a length of nylon rope to the end cross brace, stood the railing on end, and lowered it onto the nearest section of stone arch. He cinched his carbine tight across his back, and inched across on hands and knees. He repeated this several times, zigzagging across the 60-foot wide river until he sat upon the last section of the arch.

He slipped the plastic bags over his legs and bound them tight with the bungee cords, then waded ashore. He had hoped to be hunting on top of the mountain by now, and still had the mountain to climb. The mountainside had been logged recently, and he could not find the switchback trail, and found instead an obstacle course of brush and treetops and scalloped rifts of bulldozed earth and stumps. He removed his vest, rolled it inside his parka and strapped it to his pack. It would be a long, hard climb.

JUST BELOW THE RIDGE his prospects brightened when he came across bear tracks. It was bear season, the reason he had driven 200 miles and crossed the river and climbed this mountain. Once on top, he looked down at the black river snaking through



the broad alluvial marsh. For him, the river was the boundary line that divided civilization from the wild, his domestic persona from the hunter who dwelled here. Beyond, he heard the hiss of highway commerce, and he turned his back and faced north, admiring the seamless forest undulating into the distance.

Each bear season he traveled a bit farther north, seeking a wilder place than the year before, returning this year to the mountain where he had hunted deer several times with his father. He walked quickly, happily, across the flat mountaintop, every step carrying him farther into the deep space of the big woods, free at last from the gravity-like pull of civilization. He took a break and spread the topo map over a log and noted his position.

While capping his canteen he saw an exhaled breath of vapor rise above a laurel thicket and then the enormous head of a black bear. He reached down for his rifle and quickly shouldered it just as the bear flashed across a small clearing, then swung it ahead to the next opening, but the bear never appeared. Following its tracks, he found where it had angled sharply over the edge of the mountain. Hurriedly, he looped far ahead, hoping to head it off. Bears often travel the thick cover just below a ridgeline, and he waited on a boulder above a trail, waited for more than an hour, hardly blinking, his rifle at port arms.

It had happened so quickly. He couldn't believe he had missed the only opportunity he might ever have at taking a bear. All these years he had waited for a chance, just one, and he let it slip by. He thought that perhaps the river was not the demarcation line that separated Al the Office Manager, Al of the Suburbs, from the hunter that he imagined he was. An icy wind swept over the mountain and joined the bitter wind of self-deprecation that swirled within him, and he realized that he was cold.



He shook his head in disbelief as he walked across the flat, distancing himself from his blunder, away from that other self. He hunted now for a new line to cross, where he could regain his confidence and the stealthy tread of the stillhunter. He stalked the dark timber near a series of beaver dams, mended the edges of a swamp, followed the flow of the land without a plan, guided solely by intuition. He heard only a few distant shots, and thought he might run into another hunter, but he was far from the highway to the east.

Bobcat tracks dotted a windfall, and he sat on the log where the cat had sat. At noon he was reluctant to eat, afraid to drop his guard, but knew that was foolish as his chances of seeing another bear were slim.

The hot tomato soup warmed him, and he devoured both of his egg salad sandwiches. He closed his eyes for a minute, and they simmered in the sockets like hot stones, then cooled. He nodded for a few minutes, and when he flung his eyelids open his heart hammered wildly: A black shape was moving under some hemlocks. A procession of seven wild turkeys, longbeards all, filed past a dark pool, their reflections in the still water as perfect and detailed as the birds themselves.

HE FOLLOWED A LINE of rust-colored buck rubs as if they were markers blazed just for him. A doe trickled by, followed by a grunting buck, all wet and wooly looking. The craggy 9-point eyed him aloofly then continued on. The terrain grew rocky, and he went partway over a ridge through a vein of laurel separating adjacent boulder fields. The expanse of rocks lent a primeval air to the landscape, and afforded him a sweeping view of the great valley. Some of the boulders were huge, and covered with decorative rosettes of lichen, like barnacled leviathans breaching the uplands.

The laurel route offered some concealment for game, and he thought this a good spot to post for a while. He sat on a flat rock wedged between two trees like a seat. The trees had grown around the rock. He did not know if it was put there by a hunter, or had lodged there in a rock slide.

Muffled words drifted up from the valley, possibly a drive in progress, but when a raven flew by he thought it might only be the ventriloqual complaints of the bird. Not long after though, five deer came sneaking up. He was surprised how agile they were coming up over the rocks, like a herd of wild sheep.

They passed nearby, blue-gray like the rocks, ears swiveling, licking their black noses before they jumped to the next series of rocks.

He hunkered deep into his parka as the wind buffeted. Intermittent snow squalls pirouetted up the valley here and there, a promenade of great ghostly dancers performing a haunting prelude to winter.

He did not see the coyote until it leaped up onto a rock and turned to watch its back trail. The wind groomed the hair tracts of its luxurious coat perfectly over the sculpted muscles beneath. It lifted its head, amber eyes squinting, its pointy nose drinking in every message on the wind. The bear hunter thought that he had never seen a more beautiful creature. A sudden squall twisted by, and the coyote vanished with it.

In one motion he pulled his right glove off with his teeth, raised his rifle and welded the crosshairs of the 2x scope on a bear climbing the rocks. It was coming up fast, mouth open slightly, ivory teeth behind black gums, panting. He had to make this shot, but had to let the patient hunter within guide his hand and heart. The bear was about 150 yards below, but coming up for certain. He lowered the little .35 pump



carbine and watched the bear climb. It was a riveting black shape in a sea of white boulders.

The dance of the snow squalls ended abruptly, and Old Man Winter himself swept across the stage of the great valley. An opaque curtain of snow roared across the boulder field and he lost sight of the bear. He squinted through the scope and saw nothing, then stood on the rock seat, bobbing his head like an owl. He turned his face from the wind, and in the instant that he blinked the snow from his eyelashes he saw that the bear had already passed him and was quartering away. His father's carbine leapt to his shoulder and spoke of its own accord, and then again.

The bear lay with legs splayed, its head outstretched upon a rock as if it were carefully posed by someone for pictures, and indeed it was this image that he would remember for the rest of his days. A pale sun peeked through a gauzy breach in the clouds, bathing the boulder field and the bear and the bear hunter in blinding, prismatic light.

He touched the bear to assure himself that it was real. The hunter trembled, enveloped by a blizzard of thoughts and images from his decades-long odyssey, and those things swirled with his emotions, then passed as the storm had passed. He stood calmly in the light, awestruck and thankful.

IT WAS NEAR DUSK when he had the bear down by the river. Luckily, he had lots of rope in his pack, and he fashioned a harness around the bear's shoulders and neck. He crossed the river on the railing as he had done before. It was not a large bear, less than 200 pounds, but when he tried to pull it into the slow current, he found it to be less than buoyant, or perhaps it was hung up on a log.

He was pacing the shore when he was struck with an idea. He turned the railing sideways and placed the hollow tube of the center cross brace over a reinforcing rod protruding vertically from a huge piece of concrete, then tied the rope onto the end cross brace. He proceeded to push the railing in a circle, and it wound the rope in like string on a spool, and the bear came across swiftly, head raised, as if it were swimming to shore.

TWO DAYS LATER Al left his suburban home early, avoiding the congested commute. Instead of the elevator, he took the stairs to his office on the 7th floor. Al the Office Manager drank coffee and looked out the window, collecting his thoughts for the day. He stared at a tiny patch of blue hillside at the edge of the city, a bit of woods that reminded him of the mountains where he always longed to be, where a part of him seemed to beckon. But everything was different now.

The steadfast and determined hunter from across that northern river had returned with him, stood with him now in this light of a new day, having stood with him on a rocky slope with the bear, in that light of an older time.





FIELD NOTES



Mutual Interest

INDIANA — Recently, I got into a serious conversation about how deer are aged. I was explaining tooth formation and wear when I remembered I was talking to my dentist.

— WCO JACK A. LUCAS, BLAIRSVILLE



Ready to Rumble

WYOMING — As a black bear nudged its muzzle through a screen door to get at a freshly baked banana cake, Beverly Malitsky punched the bruin square in the nose. The bear hasn't been seen since.

— WCO WILLIAM WASSERMAN, TUNKHANNOCK

Bringin' Work Home

SNYDER — I was called to a residence to take care of a bear that went up a tree, and later that same day had to go back because a different bear with three cubs was up the same tree. With help from the landowner and neighbors, Deputy Shane Mallery and I were able to process the mother and cubs and move them to another area. When I finally got home I spotted my June *Game News* on the counter. The three cubs in a tree on the cover didn't do much in helping me forget about my tiring day.

— WCO HAROLD J. MALEHORN, SELINGSGROVE

It's Working

LANCASTER—Thanks to landowners enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), and work by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, I'm noticing better habitat along our stream corridors. I've seen some holdover pheasants, and I'm optimistic there was some nesting success in the spring.

— WCO LINDA L. SWANK, KIRKWOOD

Pound for Pound

GREENE — Art Batson told me that while gobble hunting he watched a long-tailed weasel run up the back of his turkey decoy and take a bite out of the head. When the weasel didn't get any reaction, it jumped down on the ground and stood up on its hind legs, staring at the decoy as in disbelief.

— WCO ROD BURNS, WAYNESBURG

There for a Reason

MONTGOMERY — I was picking up a roadkilled deer near a deer crossing sign when a buck ran across the road right behind me, narrowly avoiding being hit by another vehicle. Then, not long after, on Rt. 100, a group of five deer were struck and all killed at the same time near another crossing sign.

— WCO BILL VROMAN, FREDERICK

Should Add to Kit

SULLIVAN — A group of State Police officers watched as I worked on a tranquilized bear at their barracks in LaPorte. I applied ointment to the bear's eyes to keep them moist, anesthetic gel to the area where a tooth was pulled for aging, and antibacterial cream to some minor wounds. After someone pointed out that the bear had some thinning hair, one of the troopers asked if I carried Rogaine.

— WCO WILLIAM M. WILLIAMS, MUNCY VALLEY

That'll Do It

WESTMORELAND — I wondered why Fayette County WCO Charlie May was using so much cracked corn to bait in turkeys to be netted for transfer to another part of the state until I joined him one day. The first "wildlife" we lured in was a pot-bellied pig.

— WCO RODNEY ANSELL, MT. PLEASANT

Off the Hook

BEDFORD — Deputy George Conner was checking some stocked streams before trout season, looking for fish poachers, when he noticed a fisherman take off from the area clutching a trout. Although George made a positive identification of the violator, he was unable to make an arrest because the osprey could fly faster than George could run. Always one to get in the last word, George quipped that he would have only given a warning anyway.

— WCO DAN YAHNER, EVERETT

Not What it Seemed

MONTGOMERY — I noticed a large green truck outfitted with a lifting boom and motorized winch ahead of me in traffic, and as I closed the distance I noticed RKD Hauling in big letters on the side of the truck. My heart jumped for joy, thinking that a contractor to pick up roadkilled deer in the county had finally been hired. I envisioned the smile on the face of fellow Montgomery County WCO Bill Vroman, as well as our deputies, when they would hear the news. But alas, my joy went right down the drain when the truck drove right past two very noticeable RKDs. I had to chuckle as I loaded the deer onto my rack.

— WCO J. CHRISTOPHER HEIL, COLLEGEVILLE

Invaded Its Space

FAYETTE — I watched in amazement as a deer near a stream pounced fox-like on a great blue heron. The doe then aggressively pursued the large bird as it flew down through the creek bottom.

— WCO STEPHEN A. LEIENDECKER, FAIRCHANCE



It Figures

TIOGA — One night I caught a female bear in a culvert trap that had three cubs outside. The bear was so incensed at being separated from her cubs that she fought to get out and eventually lifted the door enough to squeeze out. Another time when I had captured three cubs in a trap the mother flattened both tires, ripped the lights off the trap and chewed off the handles. It's always the females that give me the trouble; the males usually just lie down and go to sleep.

— WCO ROBERT F. MINNICH, MANSFIELD

"Runwaykill?"

LYCOMING — I've picked up plenty of roadkilled deer, but recently I had to pick up one that had been hit by a plane. Fortunately, no one in the plane was injured, but the wing and propeller were damaged.

— WCO JONATHAN M. WYANT, MONTAURVILLE

Whole Lot of "Beef"

MONROE — Rick Keiper, who is employed by Monroe County Vector Control, picked up 2,256 deer from county roads in 2001, which amounts to 117,800 pounds (59 tons). This doesn't include roadkills that are removed by PennDOT on state highways, or by WCOs and deputies from residents' yards. Keep in mind that many deer hit by vehicles expire in the woods and go unreported.

— WCO VICTOR ROSA, FLEETVILLE



"D-mail"

McKEAN — My local post office leaves notices in my box to see the clerk for package pickups, but recently when I eagerly sought my package after receiving one such note, the clerk said there was no package — they just wanted to let me know where there was a roadkilled deer for me to pick up.

— WCO ROSE LUCIANE, CUSTER CITY

Nightshift

I was dismantling a beaver dam that was on the verge of causing some real damage when I found a working flashlight intertwined in the structure.

— LMO SCOTT R. BILLS, HALIFAX

Jammin'

DAUPHIN — On my way to Bedford County to relocate a mother bear and her cubs, I played music on the radio to quiet the bawling cubs. I had a dilemma, though, because when I played country music two of the cubs calmed down, but the third must have been a "rocker," because he went crazy.

— WCO JASON DECOSKEY, MIDDLETOWN

Hard to Swallow

LUZERNE — When I traced some garbage bags I found on SGL 187 back to an individual, he said that someone must have stolen his garbage and dumped it on the game lands.

— WCO DAVE ALLEN, MOUNTAINTOP

You Never Know

TIOGA — I was to drive my three deputies to a defensive tactics training class, and just as Deputy Bill Bernstein jumped into the back seat he quickly hopped back up. It seems he had found the porcupine quills I had laying back there.

— WCO RICHARD J. SHIRE,
MIDDLEBURY CENTER

Webbed Feet?

VENANGO — I noticed a small bear swimming across the Allegheny River and was amazed at how easily it traversed the swift current. The power and grace of these animals has always fascinated me, and seeing one swimming for the first time was a real treat.

— DEPUTY KENNETH E. CLARK, SENECA



No Doubt About It

FOREST — WCO Dan Schmidt and I were heading into Buzzard Swamp to trap and relocate some beavers when, after driving through the gate, Dan closed the bar and took the lock with him. When we were driving back out I stopped for him to open the gate, but he walked over to it and locked it before I could drive out. He immediately realized what he'd done, looked at me and said, "Did you see what I just did?" I said that I had, and that he had just given me a Field Note. "Oh, no!" he exclaimed. Oh, yes, Dan.

— WCO MARIO L. PICCIRILLI, SIGEL

Despicable

VENANGO — I received a call from an individual who noticed an otter swimming in the Allegheny River that was noticeably having trouble breathing after reaching the shore and then died soon after. I had a necropsy done and discovered that the otter had been shot with a pellet gun. The pellet did not go all the way through, but did cause an infection at the site, which spread to the lungs, resulting in pneumonia and a prolonged death. I hope whoever did this deed is proud of it, because I can't believe anyone else will be. Anyone with information regarding this incident should contact the Northwest Region Office.

— WCO MATTHEW P. TEEHAN, FRANKLIN

Efficient Predator

MONTOUR/NORTHUMBERLAND — While opening an access gate to a game lands, neighboring WCO George Wilcox noticed a lot of butterfly wings scattered across the ground, but the bodies of the butterflies were missing. We weren't sure what was killing them, but we got our answer when we returned to the gate and witnessed a chipmunk ambush a butterfly right in the middle of the pile of wings.

— WCO RANDY SHOUP, DANVILLE

Hangin' On

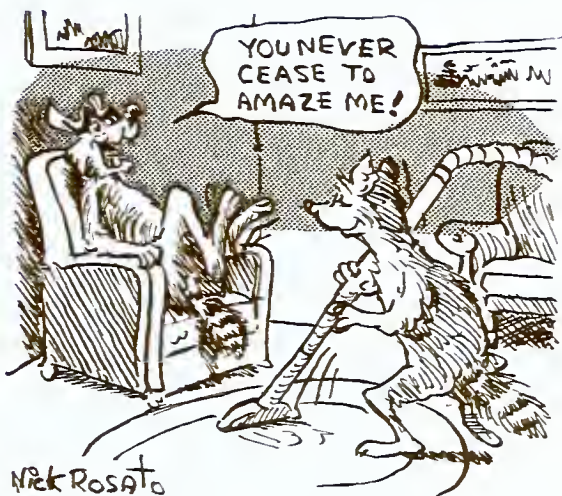
COLUMBIA — My neighbor Bill Barratt is a building contractor, and one day early last summer he noticed that a robin had built a nest on a ladder he had strapped to the top of his truck. Not wanting to disturb the newly hatched nestlings, but needing the truck, he drove to his job site and parked in a shaded area. When Bill returned home that afternoon, the female robin immediately flew to her nest on wheels and began feeding her young. This was repeated every day until the birds fledged. What Bill couldn't tell me, though, was how the chicks managed to stay in the nest while motoring down I-80 every day at 65 mph.

— LMO KEITH SANFORD, MIFFLINVILLE

Bears Galore

MONROE — During a 10-day period in June I saw 23 different bears. It looks like this county will be the place to be during the season, and especially so this year, because Monroe is one of three counties where the bear season will be open during the first week of deer season.

— WCO PETE F. SUGGENBACH, BLAKESLEE



Long Extension Cord

VENANGO — Jean McNerney told me a raccoon had entered her enclosed back porch and dragged her Dirt Devil sweeper out into a field. It's been said that raccoons clean their food before eating, but cleaning their dens with a sweeper?

— WCO LEONARD C. HRIBAR, OIL CITY

Convenient

SOMERSET — I was driving behind State Police trooper Rich Stepinski on I-79 when he hit a deer. Despite the damage to his vehicle, Rich took the incident well and even asked if I was going to issue him a permit to keep the deer.

— WCO BRIAN E. WITHERITE, MEYERSDALE

New Residents

ALLEGHENY — We have eight new peregrine falcons in Pittsburgh: Two females and two males on top of the Gulf Building, and three males and one female on top of the Cathedral of Learning (University of Pittsburgh).

— WCO BETH A. FIFE, BETHEL PARK

It's the Real Thing

CRAWFORD — On a hot, humid afternoon, Brenda Peebles and I trudged through a flooded beaver dam to document incubation of the first recorded osprey nest in Crawford County. Brenda set up her spotting scope a few hundred yards from the nest site, as I stood by, wishing I had something cold to drink. Brenda said that the osprey was turning its eggs — a sure sign of incubation — and told me to take a look. The first thing I noticed was a Coca-Cola can near the nest, and I couldn't help but think that the bird was a lot better off than I was.

— WCO MARK A. ALLEGRO, MEADVILLE



Appreciated

Thanks to teacher Mr. O'prey we had 75 students from Shenandoah Schools help plant 800 conifer trees on SGL 227, and once established, wildlife will have winter thermal cover for many years. Mr. O'prey made maps and distributed them to the kids, so they could return to see the fruits of their labor.

— LMO MATTHEW D. BELDING, PITMAN

Crowded Neighborhood

A chickadee nested in a 23-inch nearly vertical metal tube that holds the winch on my boat trailer. Nothing too unusual about that, except that there was also a wasps' nest halfway down the tube.

— LMO JOHN SHUTKUFSKI, DAMASCUS

Busy Stretch

MONROE — I was driving through SGL 127, hauling a bear in a culvert trap, when within a short section of road a buck crossed in front of my vehicle, followed by a flock of turkeys with young poults, and then several grouse flushed from some nearby ground cover.

— WCO MARK S. RUTKOWSKI, SWIFTWATER

Little Miss Muffit?

ADAMS — I was doing my reports on my computer when a spider suspended from its web dropped down right between my eyes. I was looking with crossed eyes at the intruder and waving my arms to brush it away when my wife entered the room. She commented that maybe I was spending too much time in the office.

— WCO LARRY D. HAYNES, GETTYSBURG

Unusual Hitchhikers

LYCOMING — I was passing by an impoundment on SGL 252 when two woodcock flushed from the road and landed on the hood of my truck. The timberdoodles rode until I reached the next pond and then they hopped off. To make matters worse, they didn't even leave a tip.

— WCO RICK A. DEITERICH, BLOOMSBURG

Survivor

LANCASTER — Elizabethtown Area High School graduate Jeremy Roth told me that when raising pheasants as part of his senior class project, a wild ringneck rooster would try to fight with the males inside his pen. This isn't unusual, except that the wild bird has a metal band on its leg from when it was stocked as part of the pheasant banding study in 1998.

— WCO JONATHAN S. ZUCK, MANHEIM

Consider Both Lucky

FOREST — I was driving on Route 66 near Marienville when I spotted my fourth otter in that area in just four weeks. The otter was fortunate I have good brakes on my vehicle, as I nearly hit it.

— WCO DANIEL P. SCHMIDT, WEST HICKORY

Unsold antlerless licenses: good on public/private lands

AT A SPECIAL meeting in Huntingdon on July 28, the Board of Game Commissioners voted down a proposal that would have limited the use of "unsold" antlerless deer licenses to only private land. As a result, "unsold" antlerless licenses may be used on public lands as well as private land.

County treasurers began accepting antlerless license applications from residents on Aug. 5, and from nonresidents on Aug. 19.

For the first round of "unsold" licenses, county treasures will begin accepting applications — from residents and nonresidents — through the mail on Monday, Aug. 26. The second

round of unsold antlerless licenses will begin, again through the mail, on Monday, Sept. 9.

Over-the-counter sales will not begin until November 4, except in Special Regulation Areas counties, where county treasurers will begin accepting over-the-counter applications on Aug. 26.

Regular and first round antlerless licenses will be mailed no later than Monday, Sept. 16. Subsequent rounds of unsold antlerless licenses will be mailed by Monday, Sept. 23.

For an up-to-date list of antlerless license availability, check the Game Commission website, www.pgc.state.pa.us.

Use of crossbows and muzzleloaders expanded

BEGINNING this fall, hunters will be allowed to use crossbows during the elk, bear and statewide firearms deer season (Dec. 2-14). Under the new regulation, use of crossbows is still prohibited during all archery seasons, nor will they be permitted during the October antlerless deer seasons or the post-Christmas flintlock season overlap.

Crossbows must have a draw weight of not less than 125 pounds, nor more than 200 pounds. All crossbow bolts must be tipped with a broadhead of cutting-edge design.

In 1991, the state General Assembly and Governor first approved legislation that made crossbows available to certain hunters with qualifying medical disabilities. Those medical qualifications were broadened in 1993, and to date 28,000 hunters have obtained crossbow permits based on disabilities. In 2000 the legislature removed crossbows from the list of devices prohibited from hunting, in effect, giving the Board discretion on when hunters may use a crossbow.

In 2001, the Board permitted hunters to use crossbows in Special Regu-

lations Areas during the regular and special firearms deer seasons.

At the July meeting, the Board also approved a regulatory change that will allow the use of “any long gun

muzzleloading firearm” during the October muzzleloader antlerless deer season. Therefore, percussion rifles, including inlines, and scopes, may be used during this season.

How to handle mistake buck kill

WITH NEW ANTLER restrictions in place, the Board approved a measure clarifying how mistaken kills should be handled.

Under the new regulation, hunters who mistakenly kill a buck that doesn't meet the new antler restrictions would have to complete and attach their antlered deer tag to the deer immediately after killing it and before moving it. The mistake kill must then be reported as soon as possible, but no later than 12 hours after the kill, to the PGC region office serving the county in which the deer was killed. While the hunter will be required to pay a \$25 restitution fee and surrender the antlers, the hunter will be permitted to keep the carcass.

This process is in addition to the law that requires the hunter to immediately remove all entrails and deliver the entire carcass to any Commission officer in the county in which killed and making a written sworn statement explaining when, where and how the accident or mistake occurred.

On April 9, the Board adopted a measure to increase minimum antler restrictions for the 2002-03 seasons. With a few exceptions, a buck must have at least three points to one antler to be legal. In Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Crawford, Erie, Indiana, Lawrence, Mercer, Washington and Westmoreland counties, a buck must have at least four points to one antler. A point is defined as: “An antler projection at least one inch in length from base to tip. The brow tine and main

beam tip shall be counted as points regardless of length.”

For hunters in Special Regulations Area counties, and for junior license holders, disabled-vehicle permit holders, and Pennsylvania residents on active military duty, legal bucks will be as they have been for years: one spike at least three inches long, or at least two points on one antler.

A buck with spike antlers less than three inches in length is still classified as an antlerless deer.

In other action, the board:

- Made it unlawful for those accompanying junior hunters to be out of sight or unable to physically or verbally control the junior hunter or to fail to comply with the mandatory minimum fluorescent orange requirements. The use of electronic or other sound amplification devices does not meet the definition of “accompanying.”
- Required those authorized to kill game or wildlife for crop damage to use only those firearms and types of ammunition approved for regular hunting seasons. The new provision specifically prohibits the use of bows and arrows, crossbows and muzzleloading firearms to kill game or wildlife for crop damage;
- Established fees for the sale of elk or parts of elk; and
- Removed the requirement that anyone who accompanies disabled hunters with a permit to use a vehicle to have a valid hunting license.

Game Commission K-9 teams earn national certification

THE PGC's two canine teams were among the first ever to attend and be certified at the North America Police Working Dogs Association's (NAPWDA) National Workshop in Dayton, Ohio.

Lancaster County WCO Linda Swank and canine Onyx, and Erie County WCO Darin Clark and canine Sarge became the second and third canine teams in history to certify under the NAPWDA's Wildlife Detector Dog Standards. The only other wildlife detector dog team to attend

and qualify was a U.S. Forest Service team from Alaska.

The NAPWDA was formed in 1977, and this year's workshop was the 25th anniversary of the association, which is dedicated to providing training and certifications to police canine teams. Held June 17-21, the event was attended by 168 canine teams from 119 different state and federal law enforcement agencies.

See "A Little Help from Man's Best Friend," in the July issue for more on the agency's canine program.

PGC officers continue presence on Governor's 20

AS THEY HAVE for more than a decade, Game Commission WCOs again distinguished themselves on the Governor's Twenty, which annually recognizes the top law enforcement handgun marksmen in the state.

Four WCOs made the coveted list in 2001, headed by Skip Littwin, whose marksmanship placed him in the elite group for the 14th consecutive year.

Littwin, assigned to the Bureau of Law Enforcement in Harrisburg, placed 10th overall, with an average of 1474-76.3x.

Joining Littwin were David Carlini,

Clearfield County WCO, with an average of 1473.3-83.6x; Steven Bernardi, a Land Management Group Supervisor in the Southcentral Region, 1472.3-73.3x; and Guy Hansen, York County WCO, 1460-70x. Carlini and Bernardi ranked 11th and 12th, respectively, on the Governor's Twenty list, and Hansen was 16th. Carlini, Bernardi and Hansen have all made the Governor's Twenty every year since 1999.

The makeup of the Governor's Twenty includes officers from municipal, county and other police departments.

CONTACTING THE REGION OFFICES

Northwest — 1-877-877-0299

Southwest — 1-877-877-7137

Northcentral — 1-877-877-7674

Southcentral — 1-877-877-9107

Northeast — 1-877-877-9357

Southeast — 1-877-877-9470

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.

545 bobcat permits for 2002-03

KEEPING with a harvest objective of 175, for the 2002-03 bobcat hunting/furtaking seasons 545 permits will be awarded, at a public drawing at the Harrisburg headquarters on September 13.

"Based on the harvest success rate of the 2001-02 season and our survey of unsuccessful bobcat permit holders, we plan to conservatively increase the number of permits allocated in order to move closer to our harvest objective of 175 bobcats," said PGC Executive Director Vern Ross.

Last year, the Game Commission awarded 520 permits, from an applicant pool of nearly 3,100. In 2000-01, the first bobcat season in 30 years, 290 permits from an applicant pool of 3,276 were awarded.

During the 2000-01 season, 58 bobcats were harvested. The next year, 146 were taken, 122 by trapping and 24 by hunting.

According to PGC biologist Dr. Matthew Lovallo, nearly 14 percent of permit recipients made no attempt to harvest a bobcat during the 2001-02 season, and 5 percent indicated they were interested in obtaining a permit for their collection of hunting and trapping memorabilia. He noted that these figures are similar to the 2000-01 seasons.

Lovallo noted agency staff usually met with every successful bobcat hunter and trapper within four days. The carcasses were sexed, weighed, measured (total length and chest

girth), and a canine tooth was collected from the lower jaw for age determination.

In addition, stomachs were collected and frozen for diet analyses at Colgate University. Blood samples were collected from most of the bobcats for toxoplasmosis testing at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania. A kidney and surrounding abdominal fat were collected to assess health of harvested bobcats, and reproductive tracts were collected from all females to assess pregnancy rates and litter size.

The Game Commission has continued, and in some areas, intensified efforts to monitor the bobcat population. During 2001, there were more than 100 bobcat killed on roads, and trappers without bobcat harvest permits reported catching and releasing an estimated 500 bobcats. On the 2001-02 Game-Take Survey, hunters reported seeing bobcats in all but Chester, Delaware, Lawrence and Philadelphia counties.

"The results suggest our bobcat population continues to expand geographically and numerically throughout the state," Lovallo said.

The hunting season for bobcats is set for Oct. 19 through Feb. 22, and the trapping season is Oct. 20 through Feb. 22, and only in Furbearer Management Zones 2 and 3, the same two furbearer management areas that have been open since 2000. Licensed furtakers will be allowed to take one bobcat.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

Dauphin County man charged with multiple counts of poaching

RAYMOND L. GROSSER, 49, of Halifax, Dauphin County, has been charged with unlawfully taking deer, turkey and bear, and faces \$3,250 in fines. Charges were filed in District Justice Gregory Johnson's office in Dauphin by WCO Mike Doherty.

After finding a decomposed bear carcass in Weiser State Forest, personnel contacted the Game Commission. The claws had been removed, and the bear may have been killed with a crossbow.

A convicted felon, Grosser is prohibited from owning or possessing firearms, but he does own a crossbow. On Friday, July 12, Game Commission officers executed a search warrant at Grosser's residence. Blood stains were found on the tailgate of Grosser's truck, and through DNA testing, can

be identified to a particular species and animal. Additionally, bear hair and other tissue were found in the vehicle. "From all the evidence we collected, we know the bear was dead behind his house, we know it was dead in his truck, and we know it was dumped a mile up the road from his house," explained WCO Doherty.

During the investigation, officers discovered evidence of other big game animals taken illegally, and a local resident came forward to provide additional evidence to show that Grosser had taken a deer unlawfully in May.

"We believe at least one other person may have been involved," said Doherty. He urged anyone with information to call, toll-free, 1-877-877-9470. All calls will remain strictly confidential.

2002 Pennsylvania duck stamp and print on sale

WITH VISIONS of frosty autumn mornings in a duck or goose blind, waterfowl enthusiasts, and others who appreciate wildlife fine art, might want to think about purchasing Pennsylvania's 2002 voluntary duck stamp and print from "The Outdoor Shop" on the Game Commission's website at www.pgc.state.pa.us.

The work of wildlife and nature artist Gerald W. Putt, of Boiling Springs, is titled "Cold Feet — Snow Geese," and topped 23 other entries in the annual PA Duck Stamp contest held last September as part of the Pymatuning Waterfowl Expo. The stamp and print feature white and blue color phase snow geese. Putt is the first person to win the PA Duck Stamp

contest five times.

The "Cold Feet — Snow Geese" print with mint stamp is available from the Game Commission for \$140.50 (add \$75 for framing). Posters of the 1997 through 2002 winning duck stamp contest designs are \$12 each (add \$35 for framing). PA residents must add 6% sales tax along with shipping and handling costs. The voluntary duck stamp costs \$5.50; \$22 for a plate block of four; and \$55 for 10. Duck stamps and prints for the 1997 through 2001 designs are available.

Customers can also order by calling toll-free 1-888-888-3459, or write PA Game Commission, Dept. MS, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797.

POWA winners

AT THE SPRING meeting of the Pennsylvania Outdoor Writers Association, Bob Sopchick captured the Pennsylvania Deer Award for "Butcher's Deer," in the December 2001 issue, and the "Best Published Black and White Art" award for "Mighty Oak," used to illustrate "The Witness Tree," in the October 2001 issue. *Game News* Associate Editor Bob D'Angelo won the "Best Magazine Feature" award for "The Sacrifice," in December 2001. And Ken

Hunter won "Best Published Color Art" award for the chipmunk painting featured on our June 2000 cover.

In addition, Ron Tussel won the Lantz Hoffman Memorial TV/Nonbroadcast Video Award, for a video he did covering Camp Compass Kids. This award is sponsored by the Blair County Conservation Officers Association, as a tribute to the former director of the Game Commission's I&E Bureau, who was also an active deputy wildlife conservation officer.

Oral vaccine info

TO DECREASE the number of rabies cases here, the PA Department of Agriculture and the PA Department of Health are cooperating with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services in an oral raccoon rabies baiting project in western Pennsylvania. A vaccine packet is placed inside a fishmeal block and dropped from low-flying airplanes or helicopters, and spread by teams on the ground. The vaccine treated baits were distributed in August.

Baits should be left alone, but intact baits can be moved if found where children and pets play. Damaged baits should be bagged and disposed in the trash. Wear gloves or use a paper towel when picking up bait. Toss intact baits

into a fencerow, woodlot, ditch or other area where raccoons may be found. Wash your hands after any skin contact with damaged bait.

If a pet eats a bait: A few baits are not harmful, although eating a lot may cause vomiting or diarrhea. Do not risk getting bitten by taking bait away from your pet. Confine your pet for a couple days, and check the area for more baits. If your pet ate baits, avoid your pet's saliva for 24 hours, and wash skin or wounds that may have been licked. For more information, contact USDA Wildlife Services at 717-728-0400; PA Dept. of Agriculture at 717-783-9550; or the PA Department of Health Information Line at 1-877-PA HEALTH.

The PA Department of Health, with many local partners, is hosting a Healthy Hunting Workshop on September 21, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Jefferson County Fairgrounds. Participants can pick and choose from: Eddie Eagle: Kids and Gun Safety; Trauma in the Woods; Survival Tactics; Treestand Safety and much more. Health screenings and assessments, and a raffle are also included. Many retailers will be on hand displaying their wares. The opening session features the Pennsylvania Physician General, Dr. Robert Muscalus. Admission price is minimal. Participants are requested to pack a lunch and bring their families. For more information call 814-765-0542.

Celebrate National Hunting & Fishing Day at Middle Creek, Sunday, September 29

THE 16TH ANNUAL Middle Creek Wildfowl Show held from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. on September 21 and 22 features handcarved waterfowl decoys, other wildfowl art, retriever demonstrations and much more. General proceeds from the show will benefit the Wildlands Trust Fund for the preservation of open space.

Ever wanted to try shooting or fishing, but never had the opportunity? Have an interest in the outdoors, wildlife, conservation?

If so, come to the Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area on September 29 and help celebrate National Hunting & Fishing Day, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

National Hunting & Fishing Day is designed to acknowledge and celebrate the contributions of hunters and fishermen to conservation. It is also an opportunity for people with

little or no experience to learn about the enjoyment and values of outdoor pursuits.

There will be hands-on activities for young and old, exciting programs and educational exhibits throughout the day. Kids will be able to try and catch a fish.

Everyone will be able to try shoot-

ing a BB gun, a bow

and arrow, learn to cast a fly fishing rod, load a flintlock rifle, even learn how to call in a wild turkey.

Lunch and refreshments will be sold by several local outdoor groups, and there will even be free samples of "PA surf & turf" (panfish and venison).

The event is open to the public free of charge and will be held rain or shine. Middle Creek is on the Lancaster/Lebanon county line, two miles south of Kleinfeltersville. For more information, contact the management area at 717-733-1512.



Thanks to the fifth graders at the Crestwood Area School District's Fairview Elementary School, bluebird boxes were built and erected in many of the storm water retention ponds in Wright Township, Luzerne County. Pictured left to right, front row: Rich Zimmerman, Joanie Schmidt, WES Joseph Wenzel, Tim Mosdian, and Tom Peeler. Back row: Dale Hildebrand, (WTEAC Chairman) and Jerome Yatsko. Rich Zimmerman recently retired after serving as a 5th grade

environmental science teacher in the district for the better part of his 34-year career and who also was instrumental in creating a nature trail at the school.





Off the Wire

by Bob D'Angelo

West Virginia

There were 43 wild boars taken (18 by bowhunters, 25 by gun hunters) during the 2001 firearms and archery seasons — down from 46 taken in 2000. Thirty were harvested in Logan County and 13 were taken in Boone County.

North Dakota

Hunter success in 2001 for moose was 91 percent; elk, 46 percent; and bighorn sheep, 100 percent.

New Hampshire

There were 9,143 deer taken by hunters in 2001 — down 16 percent from the 2000 harvest, and 15 percent below the 5-year average. A 264-pound buck was taken during the muzzleloader season last year.

Michigan

What are four bears, five bobcats, a wild turkey and a badger worth? How about 557 days in jail, \$39,176 in fines and loss of hunting privileges for 31 years. That's what the courts gave five poachers caught in an undercover sting by conservation officers. One of the violators had five prior wildlife related convictions, and his hunting license had already been suspended.

Gals Afield

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reports that there are about 1.2 million female hunters nationwide. The highest concentration is in the Midwest, followed by the West and the South. Female participation in the Northeast is the lowest among all regions.

Still Pretty Rare

In the 1990s, there were 67 reported mountain lion attacks on people, resulting in eight fatalities and 59 injuries.

Massachusetts

There were 9,829 deer taken by hunters in 2001 — the fourth highest harvest on record. The shotgun season accounted for 6,057 deer; muzzleloading season, 854; archery season, 2,914; and special season for paraplegic sportsmen, 4.

Wisconsin

Wingshooters have been denied the opportunity to join hunters in 38 other states in having a hunting season for mourning doves, thanks to the ruling of a judge who reversed his own prior decision to hold a season. The judge ruled that the state Department of Natural Resources does not have the authority to set a dove hunting season.

Big Bucks

In 2001, hunters 16 and older totaled 13 million, hunted an average of 17.5 days each, and spent \$20 billion.

From somewhere beyond the early ground mists, the shrill and musical bugle sounded, rising higher and higher.

Pennsylvania Elk . . . Personally

TO THE EAST, a tint of rose tickles the toes of a sky still black from night. My breath emerges in trailing white puffs, telling my eyes what my fingertips and nose already know. It's cold, but that's not unusual for a mid-September dawn.

The brightening landscape looks as if it has been touched by a cosmic breath, as if the whole world had said, "ah" into the chill air. Frost fringes the long meadow grass and ice curls bloom from the ground beneath my feet. So far this morning the show has been one of sight and feeling, but then I hear it. Somewhere beyond the early ground mists, between where I'm standing and the farthest hills. The sound is shrill

and musical and impossible in that stillness, high and rising higher. Under my hat my scalp tingles, a near-electric sensation, as if I were trying to bristle my "fur."

The whistle that is not a whistle ends in hollow, coughing grunts that could only come from something deep-chested, strong and wild. The maker of the sound stops, but the mountains fling back echoes. This is what I and this place have been waiting for. I raise binoculars as antlers emerge from the fog. I shiver. This is my first elk sighting in Pennsylvania.

For many years "Pennsylvania elk" was an oxymoron. The words just didn't belong together. Even today, quiz someone about the appropriate game animal to pair with the Keystone State and the near-guaranteed answer is "deer." Pennsylvania is so much associated with whitetails that last fall a popular Internet weather site gave a special "Pennsylvania Deer Hunter's Forecast."

In Pennsylvania, deer now live in practically everyone's backyard, including my own. Elk, on the other hand, live in a small area in the state's northcentral region. Today, Pennsylvania's elk herd is estimated to be about 700, even after last fall's hunt. Although "Pennsylvania elk" will probably

Bob Steiner



never be the default response to that quiz question, no longer are the two words incompatible.

Years have passed since that frosty dawn on Winslow Hill when I saw my first Pennsylvania elk, yet the animals still seem like a miracle. When the bugle sounded that day, Pennsylvania changed forever for me. The Penn's Woods I knew so well, a familiar place of squirrels and grouse and chickadees and deer, became something else. Penn's Woods had elk. The best I can describe the transformation in perception is that it was like believing you were in heaven already and then coming to the entrance of the Pearly Gates.

The first time I saw Pennsylvania elk, I tried to analyze my feelings. Were they the common clichés of awe, wonder, amazement? No, I was experiencing something akin to thankfulness, although I hardly knew to whom (maybe just for being alive so I could be there). My first utterances to the friends who were with me were an understated, "This is great," followed by, "We should have elk all over the state."

Along with my gladness, I felt sadness. These comparatively few square miles of woods were richer for having elk. By contrast, the rest of Pennsylvania's forests were paupers. I wanted to see the wealth spread around. I know now that's not possible, because elk are not showpieces that can be issued to a neighborhood. As wild animals they have their own needs, not compatible with much of our state. I know that Pennsylvania's elk have already made themselves unwelcome in backyards, cornfields and pumpkin patches, and have run afoul of highways and railroads. Yet I still have a from-the-heart feeling that all of Pennsylvania should have elk, even though my brain tells me it can't be so.

I satisfy my good will by taking friends and special relatives "down to see the elk." I have become a proselyte for the animals. Before they encounter elk, my guests are content to view whitetails. They learn, as I did, that once you see an elk, it ruins you

forever for deer. My guests pile into my comfortable "traveling van," with seating for seven, and we head for the Game Commission elk viewing area on Winslow Hill. The designated parking, benches and small, roofed theater for elk programs are nice, probably necessary, amenities now that elk-viewing has become so popular.

Sometimes, though, I need to get "back in," to see Pennsylvania's elk as they deserve to be seen, in the woods. Elk are a function of the land, so it's back to the land I go. Only a select few go with me; only those who have hunter savvy and can stay still and silent on stand are invited.

We go to a secret spot on state forest land. We hike or mountain-bike several miles up the gated dirt lane, following a winding stream until it fingers out of existence and we reach the top. Here are unexpected fields, intermingled with woods both young and old, a mix of oak, hickory, maple, beech, black cherry and evergreens. Rich grazing, plentiful browse and crunchy acorns set a banquet table for elk.

On the way we stop to look at antler-ripped saplings, shredded young pines, marble-sized droppings and hand-sized tracks. The elk are here. We reach our favorite elk-watching meadow in late afternoon. The best seats in the house are on a sparsely wooded hillside carpeted with ferns. The feathery stems are tall enough to hide a person in camouflage, sitting with binoculars or camera. Below is a flat, grassy expanse, a natural stage. Backing the opening is a crabapple and hawthorn thicket that falls away to a hemlock-dimmed hollow. The wooded hill beyond is already showing hints of the fall color that makes Pennsylvania a rival to New England.

We try to get there ahead of the elk, but sometimes we misjudge. This time they are already in the field, cows and calves calmly feeding. Several deer are on the sidelines, but they're dismissed as comic relief. We sneak past the grapevine tangle on the edge and hope there aren't turkeys

there to flush and spook the elk, like last time. A big cow glances up nervously as we ease into position in the ferns, and then lowers her head again.

We hear soft, mewing sounds, the calves. I'm no longer surprised at how vocal elk are compared to deer, not even when a cow barks at our strange shapes on the hillside. She settles down and we wait. I know that for the first-time elk viewers with me what we have seen so far will be enough to keep them buzzing the entire trip back home. I'm confident there is more and better to come.

A grouse drums behind us, confusing fall's shorter day length with spring. In seeming answer, the first bugle sounds, close. A brief, dramatic pause, then the bull trots into the opening, a living storm warning with lightning hovering in the air. He swings his antler-crowned head and the

atmosphere fairly sizzles. No longer is the scene bucolic, but charged with expectant energy. I tense, too.

This bull is so much into the rut he is dripping wet in the neck and muzzle. Wild-eyed, mouth open, heavy neck outstretched, he lays his long headgear along his back and lets loose. The early autumn Pennsylvania hills send the sound back. From an evening-misted valley beyond, a rival bull bellows his own call, like a second echo.

I turn to look at the young teenager with us, who has never seen a Pennsylvania elk before. His eyes are Christmas-morning wide. He catches my glance and grins back, as the bulls sound off again. These bugles weren't a song of the East to several generations before us, but they are to me, to him, and will be to his children's children. □

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The Naturalist's Eye

By Marcia Bonta

Larger than an American kestrel and smaller than a peregrine, this uncommon falcon is fascinating to watch.



Visitor from the Taiga

Even without binoculars we could tell the bird was a falcon that was larger than an American kestrel and smaller than a peregrine. It had a faint “moustache” mark on its face, bluish-gray back, squared-off, white-edged tail, and reddish-brown speckled breast; in short, all the field marks of the taiga form of an adult male merlin.

Bruce turned off the engine and he, our son Dave, and I watched what seemed to be an almost tame bird. At first we thought he was hurt, as he fluttered down into the road ditch and walked for a short distance, hunting on foot like sharp-shinned hawks sometimes do, but he was capable of short bursts of flight. His complete disregard for us was unnerving, but I later learned that ornithologist Arthur Cleveland Bent had described merlins as “bold, fearless, and unsuspicious; they allow a close approach when perched and will fly quite near a man in the open.”

Autumn weather had arrived the previous evening, following a storm, and the clear, cool, windy day was perfect for raptor migration. Moreover, the birds had had the sky to themselves, something they have not experienced since the invention of the airplane. I wondered if they had noticed the difference.

Our merlin had probably soared on the thermals for most of the day and then

THE CHURCH BELLS began ringing at noon and continued for 10 minutes. It was the National Day of Prayer — September 14, 2001. Everyone was focused on the death and destruction of September 11, praying both for the victims and the survivors, and looking for a ray of hope in that dark time.

To find that ray, we in Pennsylvania only had to turn off our TVs and radios and go outside into the radiance of a perfect day. As we drove up our hollow road in mid-afternoon, sunlight streamed through the trees in cathedral-like splendor, lifting my spirits.

Suddenly we encountered a raptor-size bird sitting in the middle of the road. My husband Bruce drove to within 15 feet of it before it flew a short distance onto the muddy road bank, clawed its way up it, and then flew to a low branch overhanging the road to pick at whatever small insect it had caught and grasped with its feet.

dropped into our sheltered hollow to look for food and refuge for the night. Formerly known as "pigeon hawks," because their flight resembles that of pigeons, merlins prey mostly on small birds, hunting them from perches, but also by flying rapidly below the treetops or even close to the ground as this one was doing. They also eat insects, particularly dragonflies, during migration.

No doubt our merlin was hoping to catch small birds in our hollow, but he was willing to substitute insects, small mammals and even reptiles. We continued to watch him for 10 minutes as he cruised low back and forth across the road. Then he flew to a high tree branch, which assured us that he was not injured.

Bruce drove on, slowly, but the merlin persisted in flying low ahead of us and landed briefly on tree branches on either side of the car. Apparently, he was hoping we would flush prey for him. Merlins are known to attack prey flushed by other birds, such as northern harriers, and objects, particularly cars. In fact, merlins are opportunistic predators that hunt with other species such as sharp-shinned hawks, eat carrion, prey on nestling birds, and hunt bats at cave openings.

B. H. Warren, state ornithologist for Pennsylvania at the end of the 19th century, wrote in his book *Birds of Pennsylvania*: "Two pigeon hawks during the late fall lurked about the southern suburbs of the borough of West Chester, preying at regular intervals on the pigeons of a blacksmith. In one week the hawks killed or drove away 50 of the birds. The hawks would enter the boxes and take from them the pigeons." So perhaps the old name, pigeon hawk, is apt in more ways than one.

Finally, our merlin flew across the stream and disappeared in our leafy forest, probably to resume the hunting we had interrupted. That male was no doubt enroute to his wintering grounds in coastal Florida, the Greater Antilles, or Central or South America. Some merlins even migrate as far

south as northern Peru.

But a few go no farther than the Schenley Park Golf Course, a 9-hole course in Pittsburgh's Oakland section, not far from the University of Pittsburgh, according to Jack E. Solomon, a member of the Three Rivers Birding Club.

The club's Bird Reporting editor Mike Fialkovich says that the merlin roost at the golf course was discovered in November 1997 by birder Bill Hintze, who reported the birds to him.

"The birds are seen at dusk, perched on various trees planted on the golf course. They then fly into the pines planted on the golf course for the night. I have found droppings and pellets under some of the pine trees" — a clear indication of where they spend the night.

Shortly after dawn they disappear for the day, and no one is certain where they go, although through the years merlins have been seen as close as Homewood Cemetery, three miles from the golf course, or in Schenley Park itself, or as far away as 20 miles, in Natrona Heights, but it's not known for certain whether these distant birds are the golf course merlins.

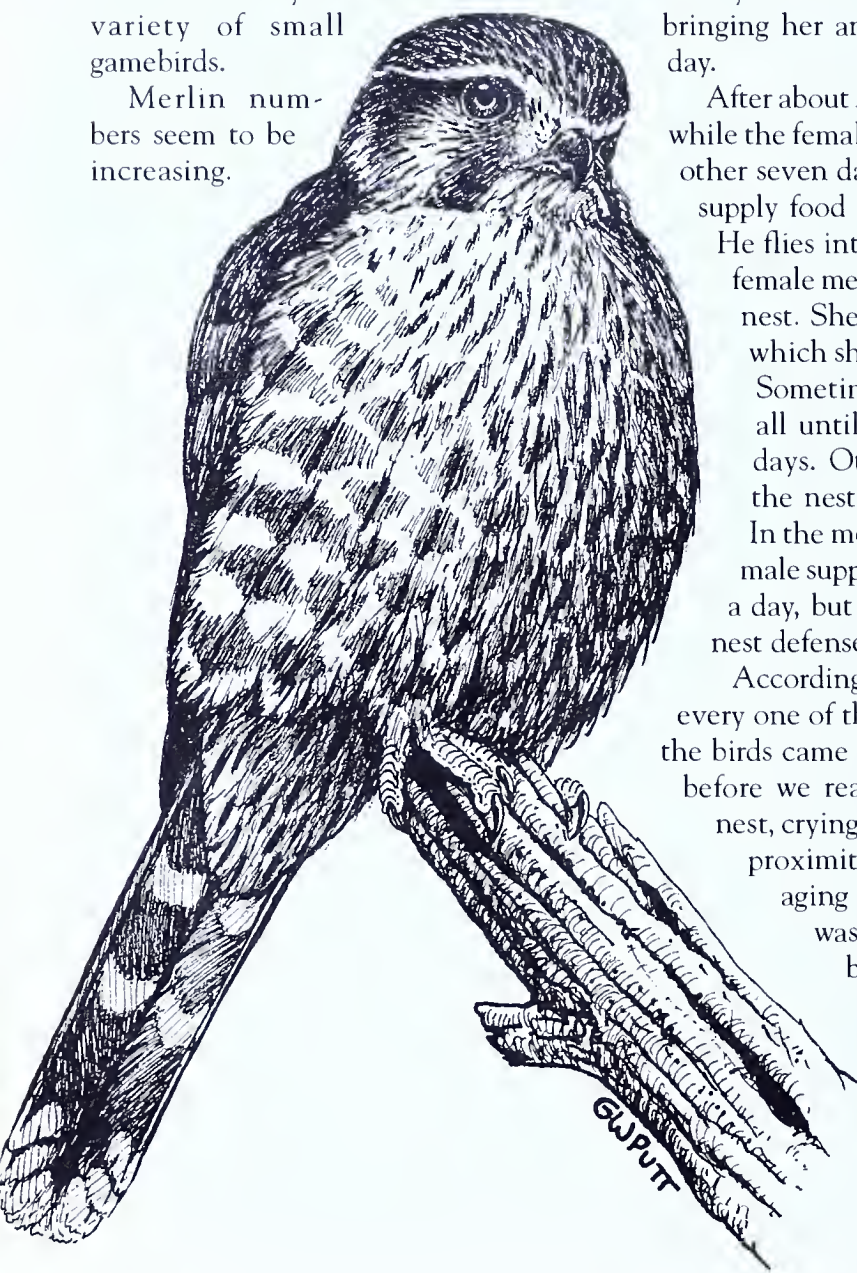
When they were first discovered there were five of them, but since then their numbers have fluctuated from two to four. Usually they begin arriving in October and leave by late March or early April. Last winter there were three merlins and, as usual, they provided plenty of entertainment for birders.

The merlin capital of North America, however, both in winter and summer, is Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, far to the north and west of Pittsburgh. According to merlin researcher Lynn W. Oliphant, who lives in Saskatoon, as of 1997 30 pairs of merlins nested in the city, "forming the densest nesting population of merlins known," he writes in *Hawk Mountain News*. But between 18 and 31 merlins also winter there and in other northern prairie cities that have an abundant prey base of house sparrows and Bohemian waxwings.

The Saskatoon merlins are a different subspecies than our taiga merlin (*Falco columbarius columbarius*) of the boreal forest. That subspecies, the prairie merlin (*F.c. richardsonii*), is the one that researchers have studied the most. The third subspecies in North America is the black merlin (*F.c. suckleyi*) of the Pacific Northwest.

The merlin is a circumboreal species, and during the Middle Ages in Europe was known as a "lady's hawk" in falconry. Both Catherine the Great of Russia and Mary Queen of Scots flew merlins at skylarks, and today a few falconers in our country use them to fly at a variety of small gamebirds.

Merlin numbers seem to be increasing.



Lately they have extended their breeding range as far south as northern New York and New England. Taiga merlins prefer to nest near forested openings, in fragmented woodlots, and on or near water. These monogamous raptors are especially renown for their spectacular courtship displays — diving, rocking, circling and soaring, and finally bowing and fanning their tails before mating.

They use old crow or hawk nests and the female lays four to six eggs. Both sexes incubate the eggs, although the male is on the nest only 7 to 15 percent of the time. Mostly he hunts for himself and his mate, bringing her an average of three birds a day.

After about 30 days the eggs hatch, and while the female broods the young for another seven days, the male continues to supply food for her and the nestlings. He flies into the area calling and the female meets him a distance from the nest. She takes the food from him, which she then feeds to the chicks. Sometimes females don't hunt at all until their young fledge in 29 days. Others start hunting when the nestlings are three weeks old. In the meantime, not only does the male supply his family with 9.6 birds a day, but he also does much of the nest defense, especially from crows.

According to ornithologist Bent, "At every one of the three nests I have seen, the birds came flying out to meet us long before we reached the vicinity of the nest, crying in distress, advertising the proximity of the nest, and encouraging us to hunt for it. While I was examining the nests the birds were most solicitous and bold, flying about the tree, perching on nearby trees, sometimes darting past or down at me in swift falcon swoops, and sometimes circling with a slow, hovering flight,

their sharp, pointed wings vibrating rapidly; and they were constantly cackling in their harsh, shrill, chattering notes," a call that Oliphant describes as a rapid *ki-ki-ki-ki*.

After the fledglings leave the nest they remain dependent on their parents from one to four weeks while they learn to hunt for themselves, often practicing on dragonflies. Then, in early August, merlins begin moving south, the females usually ahead of the males.

Sometime in mid to late August the first merlin zips past Hawk Mountain. Over the decades the long-term average of merlins seen there each fall was 33. Lately, though, the numbers have really increased. The record was 168 in 1995 and matched in 2000, but last year 176 merlin sightings

broke the sanctuary record. The increase is probably due to the merlins' breeding range expansion into northern New England. Closer to our home, the Stone Mountain Hawkwatch recorded 36 merlins last fall, second only to the 51 they recorded in 2000.

Peak migration for merlins is between mid-August and late October. And there is nothing more exciting for hawk watchers than the sight of a merlin diving repeatedly at an owl decoy. One dived 13 times at Hawk Mountain's decoy, Senior Naturalist Laurie Goodrich reported.

On the National Day of Prayer, that special day of remembrance, we felt as if our merlin's visitation had consecrated our green cathedral and bestowed a blessing on us that we will cherish for many years. □

Fun Games — By Connie Mertz

Name That Duck

Match each species of duck with its nickname, and then place the letters below to answer the question.

_____ common goldeneye
_____ oldsquaw
_____ black duck
_____ American wigeon
_____ northern pintail
_____ merganser
_____ northern shoveler
_____ scaup
_____ bufflehead

K baldpate
A spoonbill
M bluebill
T fish duck
S sprig
P butterball
U long-tailed duck
C red leg
D whistler

What does every hunter need before hunting ducks? _____

answers on p. 63

Making Things Go Right

IN BOWHUNTING, as in life, you can either let things happen to you, or you can make things happen for you. For too many years I had perched in my treestands, passively waiting for things to happen. Why was I so surprised, then, that nothing ever did? After 10 years of unfilled buck tags, I decided enough was enough. It was time to make things happen.

So it was, then, one fine October afternoon, a nice buck drifted like a brown apparition from a stand of beeches. Predictably, my heart beat in my throat as the big deer made his way toward me. Still 40 yards off, he stopped to test the wind. Apparently, he found nothing amiss, but randomly altered his direction and headed away from me at a right angle. I watched helplessly as the buck ambled farther out of range. Unless something happened to alter his course, in another 20 yards he would vanish over a ridge, into a ravine,

and out of my dreams. At one point he closed to within 35 yards, but some branches obstructed any possible shot. It was then I decided to try something I had thought about in similar bowhunting circumstances but never attempted — the decoy shot. With nothing to lose, I found a clear shooting lane well ahead of the buck's intended path. If I could place an arrow in that spot, the resultant clamor just might turn the buck and give me a shot after all. I took aim and released . . .

With bowhunting, making things go right means starting early. The factors that would spell the difference this particular year had begun several months earlier.

The Scouting Factor

I spent more time at the farm I planned to hunt, and did a lot of hiking in the July humidity. On one foray I charted the paths of five different bucks as they came and went from a woodlot into the soybean fields. More than anything else, I think effective scouting creates a subtle but significant attitude change, which is important because it builds confidence. Detecting a significant amount of deer sign, and better yet, observing and patterning deer, enables the archer to hunt with a heightened level of alertness and anticipation.

A LOT OF practice breeds consistency and consistency breeds confidence, and when the shot of a lifetime presents itself it becomes automatic.



The Practice Factor

From the moment I spotted those bucks in July I was determined to connect on one in the fall. I cranked up my compound to 65 pounds and bought a target that could withstand broadheads as well as field points. I began to practice in earnest three months before the season opener. Of course, I had always practiced before, but never with such intensity or sense of purpose. In past years, my practice had been a mere formality. As long as I could hit the target I was satisfied, and I felt that if I got a shot, I had a good chance of connecting. But this year that wouldn't be good enough. In the months and weeks before the season I shot thousands of arrows until each and every shot became automatic. I was shooting tight groups at all ranges up to 40 yards. Repetition bred consistency and consistency bred confidence.

I also spent a lot of time improving my skill at range estimation. I did this while shooting my bow, of course, but at other times, too. Walking down the street I would estimate the distances of parked cars, and then pace them off as I walked. By the time the season drew near, I could pin down ranges within two or three yards. As a result, my already respectable groups kept improving. If, no, when, I got a shot, I would be ready.

The Camouflage Factor

Nowadays there are so many camouflage patterns that it seems to be more of a fashion statement than an actual hunting aid. Back when I started bowhunting, however, the choices weren't so broad. Nonetheless, because I would be hunting from treestands, I bought a new set of camouflage clothing with a tree bark pattern. I also invested in matching gloves, hat and facemask, and even began wearing camo or dark socks. Something as trivial as your choice of socks may seem like a small detail, but it's also a potentially critical one.

There was another kind of camouflage I had to consider: how to best hide my

human scent. Over the years, my choice of masking scent has evolved from skunk to fox, but this year I settled on raccoon for the simple reason that the aroma of coon urine wafting down from up in a tree seems more natural, here in fox country, than fox urine. I also invested in new boots with rubber soles to replace my old scent-laden leather ones. By the time I had completed my new camouflage scheme, if I wasn't truly undetectable to deer, at least I felt like I was.

The Treestand Factor

Determining where to place treestands is a most important part of scouting. In past seasons I would select a likely looking spot and doggedly stick with it until the bitter (and buck-less) end. This particular year, however, I had located no fewer than 10 trees in four different woodlots. Each could accommodate my portable treestand, and they gave me plenty of options to select from as circumstances dictated. All of these trees had the same things in common: They were located along prominent deer trails; they permitted unobstructed shooting lanes; and they all were situated in such a way as to render me inconspicuous.

The year before I had made the mistake of climbing a narrow poplar in a stand of equally narrow, leafless poplars, with no other large trees or leaves to help me blend in. When four does ambled by one morning with the sun directly behind me, they detected me instantly, snorted and scurried off. I must have looked like a huge tumor growing on the side of that tree — unnatural and conspicuous. I wouldn't let that happen again.

Equipment Modification

This would also be the year I would tolerate no surprises with my tackle. To improve accuracy and consistency, I attached a different stabilizer to my bow. Having missed a shot or two in past years when deer jumped the string, I attached two different sets of string silencers on my bow-

string to dull the sound of my release to a mere whisper. Another problem I had encountered in the field while coming to full draw on an animal was the arrow slipping off the rest and clattering on the handle. It was while practicing with my broadheads that I realized the cause. I had been shooting 31-inch arrows, because my draw length had been measured to be 31 inches when I first purchased the equipment. Over time, however, my draw length had subtly increased. With field points this made no significant difference, but with broadheads it was critical, because the blades would rub the riser, nudge the arrow off the rest and result in a lost shot. I then invested in some 32-inch arrows and the problem was solved. Attention to equipment details that seem minor can make a major difference when it counts.

The Confidence Factor

The most important element in making things happen is attitude and confidence. Ultimately, confidence is a result of all the other factors described. It is a subtle change in attitude from hoping to see and shoot at a deer to knowing you will tag one. When you know you're hunting in prime deer territory (as a result of your pre-season scouting), and know you'll hit whatever you shoot at (as a result of your practice), it provides a tremendous rise in expectations as well as outcome. This caused me to do something I never would have considered doing in past years — I passed up an 8-yard shot at a buck with a single antler because I was confident I would get a shot at something bigger.

And so it was that that year my bowhunting season lasted a mere six days. All told, during that time I sighted six bucks, along with many does and fawns. On the sixth the events described at the beginning of this column unfolded.

The concept of a decoy shot had crossed my mind on similar occasions when the deer strolled off and never offered a shot, and now I was looking at the back end of a

soon-to-be-history 8-point. I had nothing to lose except the eight dollars or so I had invested in my arrow and broadhead, so I aimed for a clear spot ahead of the buck where I knew there was no chance for a ricochet and let it fly. When the leaves kicked up as the arrow struck the ground, the startled buck lunged sideways, stopped and looked around suspiciously. He then began to circle to my left. It appeared that my strategy was working like a charm. If my calculations were correct, he would pass through an open shooting lane just under 25 yards. When he disappeared behind a tangle of vine-encrusted dogwoods, I came to full draw. The arrow stayed on the rest as my 20-yard pin found a spot high behind his shoulder and I released the arrow.

Judging from the buck's reaction, I thought I had missed. I had made the mistake of using dark brown and black fletchings, making it impossible to track the arrow's flight and determine where I had hit — another lesson learned. At first, from the sound, I thought the arrow had gone low, but it turned out that what I had heard was just the scuff of leaves from the buck's hooves. While waiting before trailing the buck, I realized that I couldn't have missed. Everything had become so automatic in the shooting process from so much practice and preparation that I hadn't had to think at all. I had essentially put myself on automatic pilot, reflexes and instinct had taken over, and I had made the perfect shot.

Well, maybe not quite perfect, but certainly good enough. The blood trail was scant, and after 30 yards it stopped. I began circling the ridge until, finally, in failing light, I found my first buck, a handsome 8-point, piled up beside the trunk of an uprooted beech tree. At long last I had made things go right. Tens of years and dozens of bucks later (many taken with the aid of more recent innovations such as grunt calls and rattling antlers) I continue to make things go right. Maybe you should, too. □

The Shooters' Corner

By Don Lewis

Magnums seem to be the rage again, thus the advent of the new short magnum cartridges, and although they're extremely fast and pack a wallop, are they really necessary in the whitetail woods?

Deer Cartridge Ballistics

WOULD YOU say the 7mm Remington is the best all-around deer cartridge for Pennsylvania hunters? I've been using an old Savage Model 99 chambered for the .300 Savage, but my hunting camp buddies keep telling me I need a more powerful cartridge. They say I can't reach out more than 100 yards. Is that true?"

"No, that isn't true. The .300 Savage is much better than that, but let's check in a current reloading manual." Hornady's *Third Edition* was fresh off the press at the time and, after learning he used a 150-grain slug, I opened the manual to that bullet

weight. "I'm not sure what the factory velocity is with the 150-grain bullet, but you can see that it's possible to get 2,700 fps without going to a maximum powder charge," I said. "It also shows that the 150-grain bullet in a .30-06 is only several hundred feet faster, which isn't a great deal of difference on a 200-yard shot. The famous .30-40 Krag, which was a popular deer rifle during the 1930s, has 150-grain bullet ballistics almost identical to the .300 Savage."

"Well, I'm constantly being told that switching to a 7mm Magnum would cure all my shooting problems," he cut in.

"What are your shooting problems?" I asked. "Are you missing deer at longer ranges, or does it seem you don't have enough power to make a quick kill?"

TIM LEWIS prefers the Remington Model 760 pump action rifle in the .308 cartridge for deer hunting. The .308 is a very capable short action caliber for deer and bears in the varying terrain found here in Pennsylvania.

Helen Lewis



"That's the funny part," he said with a grin. "I've taken more deer with the old .300 Savage than most of my hunting partners have with their magnum outfits. I think they have the wrong approach to hunting in our area, because most shots are well under 150 yards. I don't see any particular need for a magnum."

"Take my advice and stick with the 99, and you're certainly right about the magnum craze that has begun to sweep through the deer hunting ranks. I'm convinced the magnum cartridge has poisoned the minds of many deer hunters. They seem to think that cartridges such as the .270 Winchester, .300 Savage and .30-06 are obsolete, but nothing could be further from the truth."

Because this conversation took place around 20 years ago, I have no idea whether the Savage owner took my advice or was finally persuaded to buy a 7mm Remington Magnum. Deer hunters for the most part are not only brand and action type oriented, but many have complete faith in just one cartridge. A friend of mine said he would not hunt deer if he couldn't use his full military stock .30-40 Krag. He would come into my office and pound my ear for a half hour on the merits of the .30-40. According to him, all other cartridges should be banned. Although he can be considered extreme, it does show just how much faith some deer hunters have in a particular cartridge. Well, to each his own, but it's not a bad idea to examine to some extent the ballistics of a cartridge.

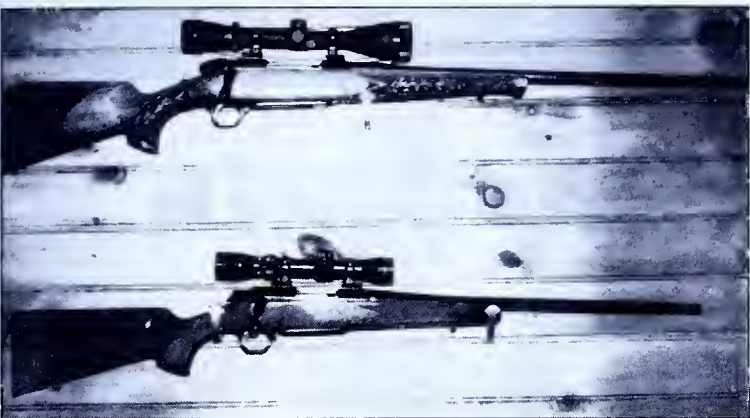
Some deer hunters think that a white-tail is as tough as a moose. There's no question that a deer can be a tough customer, and it only stands to reason, then, that a powerful cartridge might not be a bad idea. This doesn't mean that only magnum cartridges are adequate, though. I read some years ago that the .30-30 Winchester cartridge had killed more deer in Pennsylvania than all other cartridges combined. If that was true, it must be remembered that back then deer hunting was a short-range

affair, mostly in dense stands of timber. The compact Winchester Model 94 rifle coupled with the .30-30 cartridge was right at home in the thick stuff. How does the .30-30 stack up against the big boys?

Let's take a quick look at the .30-30's ballistics with its popular 150-grain flat nose bullet. It's common knowledge that the 150-grain .30-30's 2,300 feet per second muzzle velocity is nothing to boast about, and its kinetic energy barely meets the suggested 1,250 foot pounds of energy at 100 yards to qualify as a deer stopper. I don't know how it was determined, but I've read in several ballistic journals that a deer bullet should have a 100-yard energy of 1,300 foot pounds. The 150-grain flat nose generates around 1,700 foot pounds of energy at the muzzle and close to 1,300 pounds and 1,935 fps velocity at 100 yards. At 150 yards the energy output is just slightly more than 1,000 foot pounds and the velocity has tumbled to 1,765 fps. These figures were from Sierra's *4th Edition Reloading Manual*, which is completely loaded with ballistic data and contains two great programs on one CD.

To go from one extreme to the other, here are the figures from the Sierra CD on the 7mm Remington's 140-grain bullet, with a 3,000 fps muzzle velocity and a muzzle energy of 2,797 foot pounds. At 100 yards, velocity is 2,749 fps and the energy output is 2,349 foot pounds. At 150 yards, velocity is still a fast 2,629 fps offering 2,148 foot pounds of energy. Even at 400 yards, the 140-grain bullet is still traveling 2,081 fps and generating 1,346 foot pounds of energy. That's more energy than the .30-30's muzzle output. There is simply no comparison and, at first glance, automatically makes the 7mm Magnum the wiser choice between the two cartridges. Before you peel off a few hundred bucks for a new 7mm Magnum, however, let's take a realistic look at what's needed.

This comparison is not a fair one because the two cartridges have totally different approaches to hunting. The .30-30



Bob D'Angelo

TWO BROWNING rifles, both in 284-caliber. The top one is a 7mm Rem. Mag, and the rifle below is a 7mm-08. While both rifles are effective for deer, which would you rather carry when still-hunting the thickets? With a rather stiff recoil, the 7mm Magnum is not as pleasant to shoot as the 7mm-08, ammo is more expensive for the 7mm Mag, and generally, the 7mm Magnum is going to be a heavier, longer-barreled outfit.

became popular in the Big Woods of northern Pennsylvania in the 1930s and '40s when there was a high deer population there. Few shots were taken (open sights in those days) much beyond 100 yards, and it's safe to say the average shot was around 50 yards in the heavy cover. Under those conditions, the .30-30 was more than adequate.

The 7mm Magnum has long range written all over it. It's primarily designed for reaching out, so to speak. Its velocity is much faster, and the 140-grain bullet has a higher ballistic coefficient, which makes its trajectory arc flatter. These are prime requisites for long range shooting.

While it's true the 7mm Magnum is a better long range cartridge than the .30-30 and a variety of other conventional deer cartridges, there is a price to pay. With a rather stiff recoil, the 7mm Magnum is not as pleasant to shoot as the .30-30, .25-06, .260 Remington or 7mm-08 Remington. This means shooting sessions will be fewer and shorter. Also, ammo is more expensive for the 7mm, and generally, the 7mm Magnum is going to be a heavier, longer-barreled outfit. There's no free lunch.

What about other conventional car-

tridges, such as the .243 Win., .25-06 Rem., .270 Win., .280 Rem., 7mm-08 Rem., .30-06, .308 Win. or 8mm? Let's be reasonable. All of these cartridges have a place in the deer hunting realm, so the hunter has to determine which one fits best. My favorite deer outfit is a Remington Model 7 chambered for the 7mm-08, and I hunt where 250-yard shots are possible. It's a great deer cartridge in a compact rifle, and I have faith in it.

As far as I'm concerned, the hunter at the beginning of this article would be making a mistake going to the 7mm Remington Magnum, despite it having better ballistics than his .300 Savage. For the type of hunting he does, he should stick with the .300 cartridge in his Savage Model 99 lever action rifle. He and the 99 have a great relationship, and he knows his rifle intimately.

Honestly, if I thought for a moment I would be better off with one of the magnum cartridges, I would switch to an Ithaca-BSA Model CF-2 chambered for the 7mm Remington Magnum. I latched onto this outfit around 1978, but never carried it for deer. The moral here is not to worry too much about super velocities and powerful cartridges. Use any conventional big game cartridge that you enjoy shooting. Practice until you know your rifle well, and success will be yours. □

Fun Game answers:

D, U, C, K, S, T, A, M, P
Duck Stamp.

Right as Rain

IT RAINED the other day. Normally that wouldn't be cause for comment, but in this drought year — actually, for three years in a row we've fallen short on precipitation — it seemed positively momentous. We got an inch and a half in 36 hours, a good soaking.

Water from rain: an essential element in the equation of life. The rain that fell on Tuesday filled to overflowing the small vernal pond near our house, where spotted salamanders, wood frogs, chorus frogs and spring peepers congregate and breed. It sent Bald Eagle Creek surging out of its banks, replenishing riparian wetlands and laying down a coating of fertile silt in the cornfields edging the stream.

I hiked along the creek a few days later, and found wood ducks feeding in temporary pools. In one puddle lay a Canada goose egg, washed out of a nest; no doubt a raccoon or fox would come along and make a meal of it. In the field, a clutch of four killdeer eggs nestled on high bare ground. I hoped the eggs would hatch and the peeps skitter off before the farmer hitched his plow.

On the day of the rain, I had put on rain suit and boots and gone out walking in it. At Oak Pond, the surface seethed where the drops pelted it, and through the broken plane I could glimpse about three dozen cloudy-looking wood frog egg masses. They were clustered in one place, the zone of the pond where the amphibians invariably lay them. For the last several years the pond has dried up by midsummer, and I hoped this year would break the string and allow the tadpoles that would hatch from those eggs to mature and leave the pond as adults, bolstering a population that must have fallen during the drought.

Along the woods road, a pileated woodpecker hammered at a standing dead oak. I hadn't taken that tree for firewood, since it was already rotten, and I figured the birds might find the carpenter ants that had colonized the wood. On this raw rainy day, the pileated needed to fill his belly.

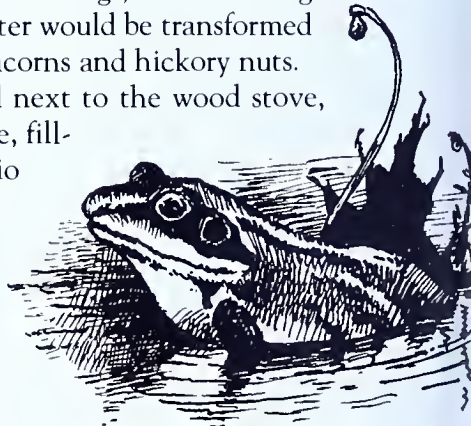
Three deer rose from beds in the mountain laurel and stared as I trudged past. They hardly looked wet, so effectively did their coats shed the rain. Tree bark gleamed black in the downpour. Water dripped from the trees' twigs, while soaking into the ground and succoring their roots. The water would be transformed into leaves and, come fall, into black-gum fruits, acorns and hickory nuts.

Back inside, I shucked my rain suit and stood next to the wood stove, warming up. A kettle of bean soup simmered there, filling the house with a wonderful aroma. The radio was on, and between symphonies the announcer gave the weather report — more moisture on the way — and said he had one word for the

weather: "Yuck."

I, however, thought it was right as rain.

Chuck Fergus



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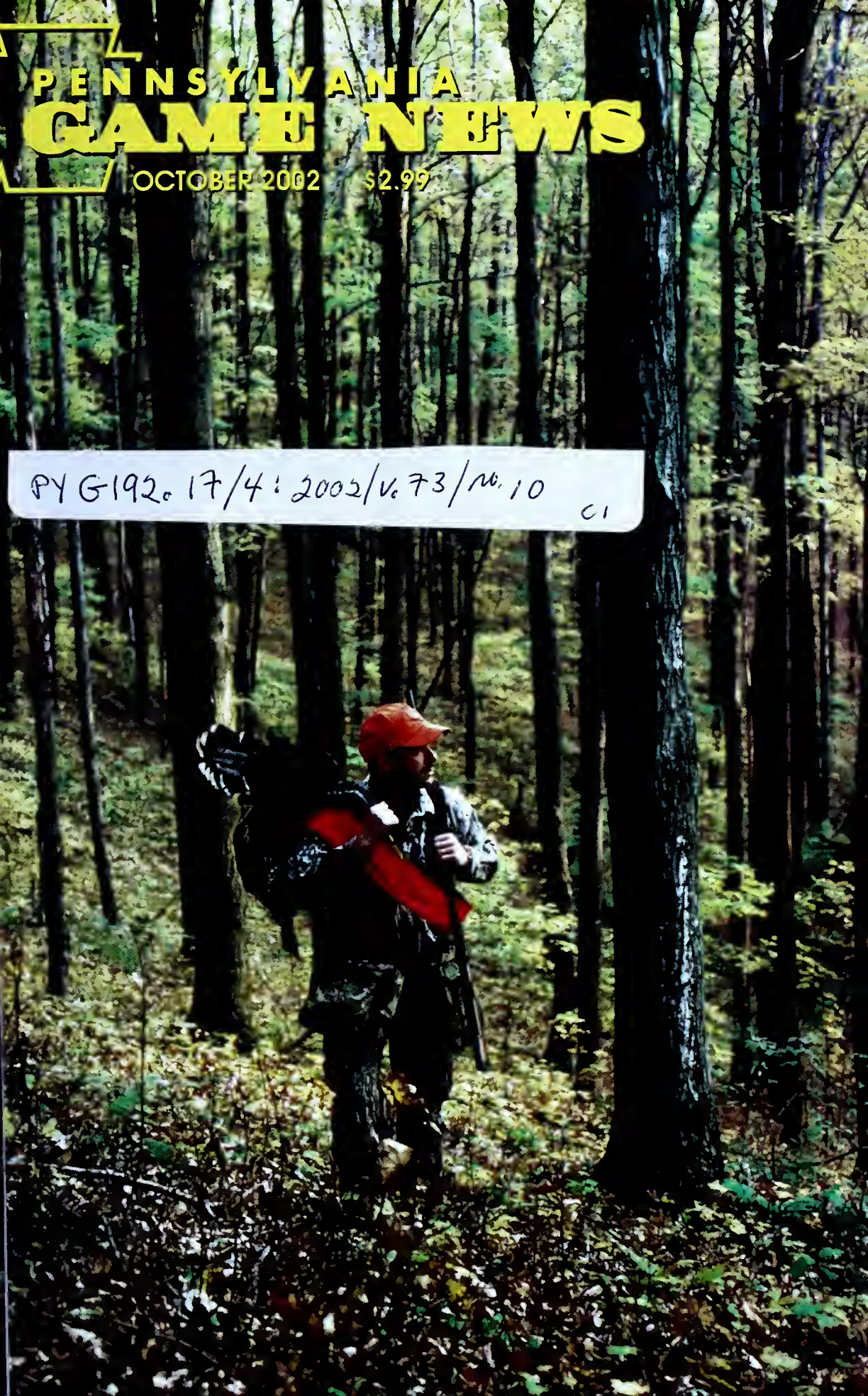
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PENNSYLVANIA GAME NEWS (ISSN 0031-451X) is published monthly for \$12 per year, \$34.50 for three years, or membership in Pennsylvania's Cooperative Farm-Game Project or Safety Zone Project, to Canada and all other foreign countries, \$13 U.S. currency, per year. Published by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Phone (717) 787-4250. Periodicals postage paid at Harrisburg, Pa. CHANGE OF ADDRESS: POSTMASTER: Send both old and new addresses to Pennsylvania Game News, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Allow six weeks for processing. Material accepted is subject to our requirements for editing and revising. Author payment covers all rights and title to accepted material, including manuscripts, photographs, drawings and illustrations. No information contained in this magazine may be used for advertising or commercial purposes. Opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Copyright © 2002 by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, an Equal Opportunity Employer, the programs of which are all administered consistent with the goals and objectives of Affirmative Action. All rights reserved.

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Newsstand consultant, Celtic Moon Publishing, 1-877-730-6263



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Something for Everyone

HELPING YOUNGSTERS — especially those who don't have a parent or other mentor who actively hunts — get involved in hunting is something the Game Commission has been working hard at over the years. Youth field days, a special waterfowl season, (held this year on September 21), and the youth squirrel hunt, first scheduled in 1996, are some prominent examples.

New for this year is a special pheasant season. It's being held October 12 & 14, the same two days of this year's youth squirrel hunt, and like the squirrel season, it's open to youngsters 12 through 16 years of age. To participate, a person needs only to have passed a hunter education course and be accompanied by an adult; no hunting license is needed.

Like the squirrel season, the new youth pheasant season is also open statewide. To increase opportunities, though, a day or so before the season, the Game Commission will be stocking more than 13,000 pheasants at 44 game lands and other public hunting grounds around the state. These areas are highlighted on page 16 of this year's digest.

Giving kids opportunities to learn about hunting is more than just a Game Commission goal. To help youngsters take advantage of this season, more than a dozen sportsmen's clubs are hosting pheasant hunts on the first day, Saturday, October 12. More than just providing places for youngsters to hunt, participating club members are also serving as mentors; they'll be on hand to guide and offer other assistance. Some are even providing dogs and shotguns. Never in the history of hunting in Pennsylvania has getting started been made more easy. As you'll probably imagine, space is likely to be limited, and preregistration is required. For more details on the mentored pheasant hunts visit the Game Commission's website, www.pgc.state.pa.us.

While you're at the PGC website, check out what else is there. Up-to-the-minute news; the new state game lands regulations, taking effect in February 2003; and the latest on hunting and wildlife are just some of the popular features. You can even follow the movements of swans and peregrine falcons banded in Pennsylvania and now being tracked via satellite, across the continent (see page 22). What should appeal to hunters and other outdoor enthusiasts is that the state game lands maps the Game Commission has been selling for many years can now be downloaded and printed from the Game Commission's website. Once at our site, just click on "Hunting Information" and then scroll down to "State Game Lands Maps."

Click on "The Outdoor Shop" for licenses, *Game News* subscriptions, books and charts, wearing apparel, patches, prints, videos, and the many other assorted items available through the Game Commission. The information available on the PGC website is growing almost every day. Check it out to see what it offers you, and visit it regularly to see what's new.

The hunting seasons will soon be in full swing. This time of year a person can hunt just about every game animal available in Pennsylvania. Have a good time, think safety, and if at all possible, introduce a family member or friend to what hunting has to offer. — *Bob Mitchell*

letters

Editor:

I believe Bob Sopchick's August "Penns Woods Sketchbook" is as beautiful a piece of writing as I have ever read. Please, keep up the wonderful work. Your magazine makes us all proud.

R. URICK
PAXINOS

Editor:

Thanks for the complimentary subscription to *Game News*, for winning the Union County Envirothon. I've already learned a lot more about the Game Commission from reading *Game News*. The featured articles were fun to read and educational, and as a hunter, I've learned a lot from it, too.

Thanks again.

L. PETRE
LEWISBURG

Editor:

In response to the August letter about skunks and dogs, I, too, had an experience when my husband Steve and his four beagles returned from the hedges and thickets. Somehow, Patch; (the male) tangled with a skunk. To make a smelly story short, Steve was in the shower and I was rinsing him with tomato juice — and he is not very fond of tomato juice — while I was chuckling from the other side of the shower curtain. I also put about one gallon of tomato juice in the washing machine before filling it the rest of the way with water to wash his clothes. And tomato juice doesn't bleach the dog . . . just "de-skunks" him.

Actually, when making pizza or pasta sauce, I can the "thin" juice most people throw away. With an avid rabbit hunter (husband), four adult beagles, and eight neighbor boys who take turns going along, I know that somewhere, sometime, somehow, I'm going to need lots of tomato juice.

S. MILLER
MIFFLINBURG

Editor:

I applaud the new antler restrictions. The Pennsylvania Game Commission has always been a leader in game management, and once again is taking a bold step. On our 148 acres, we've been letting the "little ones" go for years, even if it means eating beans for dinner. I do have a complaint, though. While I don't mind paying higher license fees, because the money goes to a good use, I don't feel I, as a nonresident, especially one who owns land and pays taxes in Pennsylvania, should be discriminated against when it comes to getting an antlerless deer license.

T. FOSTER
WINCHESTER, VA

Editor:

I just had to write after reading the Field Note in the June issue about a person fined for riding an ATV on a state game lands saying that the PGC should get with the times and start charging

people to ride ATVs on game lands. I agree. Why not open game lands roads and trails to ATVs and snowmobiles for a fee, even if it is only in the nonhunting season?

J. QUATTRONE
RIDGWAY

In essence, state game lands are managed for wildlife, yet the Game Commission not only allows, but actually encourages outdoor activities that don't conflict with that guiding purpose. Check out the Game Commission website for new regulations taking effect February 2003, and you'll see what accommodations have been made for those who want to take advantage of the outdoor recreational opportunities available on state game lands.

Editor:

Thank you all for a great magazine. As a resident of Troy for the first 18 years of my life, it's great to keep up with things up home through *Game News*, something my family gets me for Christmas. I have to respond to the letter you ran in which a nonresident wrote that the \$100 nonresident license fee was a gamble. Try \$275 or \$300 for a Mississippi or Louisiana license. Anybody who wants a guarantee should pack up his hunting gear and go straight to the grocery store.

Congratulations on the new buck regulations.

M. MANLEY
RAYMOND, MS

Your comments are welcome. Mail them to "Letters," 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Letters will be edited for brevity and clarity.



This Sure Isn't September

By John D. Taylor

LOOKING OUT across the eastern sky I could see them coming, a squadron of about a dozen birds. I hunkered down in the cut cornfield where I had seen birds feeding a few days earlier and waited for them to swing past the corner of the woodlot and follow the undulations of the land down into the low spot where I waited. At 60 yards the birds were headed directly for me, skimming the tops of the sparse, leafless trees. Short wingbeats, round bodies and a tight formation. But just before the birds dropped into the decoys they flared, banked hard to the right and flew off to the far end of the cornfield.

What went wrong? Did I move? Did they spot me? I looked over the decoys perched on the corn stubble in the field. All were upright and natural looking. Despite the cold, I hadn't moved. Mourning doves aren't supposed to be this wary, but this sure isn't September, I thought.

Four months earlier I had crouched in the same spot, sweating under humid 90-degree skies, longing for a cool breeze but excited about the arrival of a new season. Now, instead of a camouflage T-shirt, I was wearing a sweater and my duck hunting parka. Only the old Lefever side-by-side and a half dozen dove decoys were the same.

After a couple days of hunting, learning and adjusting some of my hunting tactics to match the changing habits of the birds during winter, I managed to scratch down a few doves. Although frustrating at first, relearning everything was satisfying, interesting, and it certainly gave me a new appreciation for *Zenaida macroura*.

Pennsylvania has had a late dove season since 1999, when the Game Commission divided the days allotted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's federal migratory bird hunting season framework into three separate seasons. The first season is the traditional September hunt, which normally begins September 1. Most dove hunters are familiar with the techniques used during this time. However, the later two portions of dove season are overlooked by many hunters. These include a season running concurrent with the regular small game season, usually in late October through most of November, and a late season that opens for a week or so after Christmas.

To understand how to hunt late season doves, hunters have to examine the biology of these gray speedsters.

In the late 1700s, the disappearance of mourning doves in autumn caused some naturalists to believe the birds hid under tree bark, hibernated in caves, or even flew into the sea for the winter. More sophisticated research, including the banding of more than a million birds, verified that doves are migratory birds. Every spring and fall the birds travel between northern breeding grounds and southern wintering grounds, just like waterfowl, woodcock, robins and warblers.

Part of the reason, some believe, that doves migrate is linked to how migratory birds responded to several periods of ice ages millions of years

ago. Doves are not well adapted for cold climates. The birds' feeding habits, water requirements and body structure simply won't allow it. Grouse, by contrast, adapt to cold winter weather by growing feathers (pectinations) like snowshoes on their feet, feeding more heavily, and keeping warm with behaviors such as roosting in deep, fluffy snow. Doves lack these abilities, and through evolution have "learned" to migrate.

Several factors can trigger fall migrations, but food availability and climate are the biggest factors. Photoperiod (length of day) also plays an important role. Shortening daylight as summer turns to fall triggers metabolic changes that cause the birds to accumulate fat for the flight south.

When the first cold rains of September indicate "it's time to go," instinct kicks in. The birds gather in flocks of maybe five to 50, made up of mostly females and young-of-the-year, and head south, usually flying at low altitudes. When dodging gunners, doves are known to fly up to 55 mph, but during migration they travel 20 to 35 mph. There are three major dove flyways in North America: Eastern, Central and Western.

Pennsylvania, naturally, is part of the Eastern Flyway, which includes all states east of the Mississippi River. Most of the doves hatched in from the one to three broods in Pennsylvania are bound for the Carolinas and Georgia in the fall. Banded bird studies have revealed that Pennsylvania dove hunters are shooting mostly home-grown birds — approximately 96 percent of the birds in Pennsylvania are local. Migrating New Jersey doves are another source of birds here.

Snow Birds

Mourning dove researchers define wintering ground as anything south of

the 30th parallel, which stretches across the nation from Washington D.C. to Kansas City, Missouri, and Carson City, Nevada. Technically, Pennsylvania's Mason-Dixon boundary line falls between the 39th and 40th latitudes, north of dove wintering grounds. However, there is evidence that some doves don't migrate at all. Researchers noticed non-migratory doves tend to be mostly mature males. One Missouri winter dove flock study showed a high percentage of adult males; these birds had a 3.8-percent higher metabolic rate than that noted in other birds. The higher metabolism enables birds to tolerate cold temperatures.

Grouse, quail and other galinaceous gamebirds respond to cold weather with behaviors designed to save heat and speed up metabolism. Quail, for example, covey to conserve heat. Inca doves huddle in small, pyramid-shaped groups in roosting areas, and grouse respond to cold weather by eating more, and in extreme weather, roosting under snowbanks. The lower the temperature, the more the birds eat.

Overwintering doves are different, though. Doves reduce their normal metabolic rates to handle cold weather. (Doves that are real cold can appear sluggish or torpid.) The birds also conserve energy by limiting their flights and roosting near feeding areas. This, however, is a double-edged sword: it saves energy, but it also reduces the bird's ability to function. During a prolonged cold snap doves can experience hypothermic symptoms — victims lulled into lethargy and freeze to death. A Missouri study showed 11 percent of the birds in the study lost toes due to freezing. When the worst happens, and a blizzard or severe ice storm hits dove wintering grounds, bird losses can be high. "For a substantial number of mourning doves that winter in northern and mid-latitudinal portions of the Eastern Management Unit, especially severe weather could adversely affect populations in some years," says one study assessment. For instance, a January

1951 blizzard in Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Arkansas and Texas killed 63,000 birds.

Like some of the early ideas about short-stopping migratory geese, more waste grain on the ground is believed to be another reason more doves are wintering in the North. Other theories say that over-wintering birds could be more successful in competing for spring breeding grounds, because they have not had to face a gauntlet of gunners or expend energy on the journey south. Another idea is that the birds that stay behind could be more successful because they can increase the length of the breeding season by pairing with the first birds back from the wintering grounds. Regardless of the reasons, some doves stay behind, but biologists conclude that over-wintering can be more hazardous than migrating.

Doves have other winter limitations. Water is a critical need. Doves require 2.8 percent of their body weight in water daily. Usually the birds drink from standing water — puddles, pond edges or sandbars where they can walk to the water to drink. Doves can survive up to 11 days without water, but when the temperature doesn't rise above freezing for more than a week, finding water can be a real problem.

Food is another issue. Doves eat an average of 16 percent of their body weight each day — more (up to 24 percent of their body weight) in the fall and less (as little as 7.8 percent) in the spring. Waste grain, especially corn, is an important part of the bird's autumn and winter diet. Availability is one reason for its popularity. In a Nebraska study, farmers failed to harvest six to seven percent of their corn crop, more than 350 pounds per acre. When grazed over by cattle, which ate most of

the ear corn, but not individual kernels lying on the ground, 183 pounds per acre remained. Wildlife, including doves, takes advantage of this waste. The problem is that it is not a high quality food.

Doves are primarily weed-seed eaters. Birds bagged in a field with cut corn silage in September are more interested in the ragweed, foxtail and other weed seeds than the

corn. Weed seeds are high octane dove fuel.

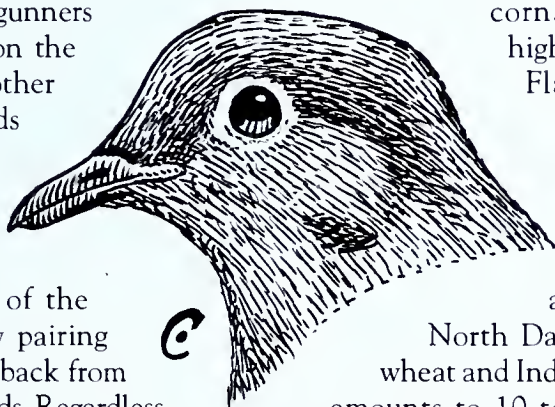
Flax and charlock, for example, have the highest energy content of any dove food eaten,

according to a North Dakota study. Bread wheat and Indian corn — which amounts to 10 to 30 percent of a dove's diet in the northeastern United States — had the least energy content. Broomcorn panicum and common sorghum, however, are good quality dove foods. Access to food can also be an issue. Doves lack a pheasant's strong legs to scratch through snow to find waste grain, so they rely on exposed seeds and grain.

Late Season Tactics

Mourning doves have been hunted in Pennsylvania since 1945. Hunters here take more doves than any other upland gamebird. In 2001, for example, hunters shot nearly 461,000, more than that year's combined harvests of grouse (159,610), pheasants (244,282), quail (4,276), and woodcock (32,504).

There are fewer dove hunters today, however, than there once were. Harvest figures are also down, according to the Game Commission's Game-Take survey. In 1983, more than 188,000 dove hunters in Pennsylva-



nia bagged about 1.6 million birds. During the 2001-02 season, according to the Game-Take survey, there were 51,144 dove hunters.

The decline began in the early 1990s, when harvest numbers dropped below a million birds annually and hunter numbers fell each year. Even though the number of dove hunters is declining, existing dove hunters are shooting the same or a higher ratio of birds bagged to hours hunted.

Game Commission biologist John Dunn doesn't know how many hunters participate in the late season because it's too new. However, he noted that dove harvest patterns generally indicate that hunter success, hunter participation and dove harvests decline as the season progresses. The largest portion of the state's total dove harvest takes place in early September, when the most birds are available. Between 70 and 80 percent of all doves do not survive their first year. If a juvenile survives its first year, the attrition slows. Adults have a 50-percent mortality rate, and average annual mortality for a stable population is estimated at 60 percent.

The doves available to hunters during the late season are a combination of resident and migrating doves wintering in Pennsylvania, Dunn said. "The late season is largely designed to offer dove hunters some opportunities on birds wintering in the southern tier counties," he said. With less forest and more agricultural land, southern tier birds typically roost on the edge of suburbia and farmland. "Under the right circumstances — when dove hunters locate a well-used feeding area — late season shooting can be almost as good as September," Dunn said.

Scouting

Scouting is crucial for hunting win-

TAYLOR'S ROAST DOVE

Ingredients: Six doves, zucchini squash, green beans, tomatoes (or garden-style salsa), soy sauce, red wine vinegar, basil, oregano, garlic powder and honey.

Place chopped squash, green beans and tomatoes into bottom of small roasting pan. Sprinkle soy sauce, red wine vinegar and spices (or salsa) over vegetables to taste. Add doves, breast up, and place birds so they are resting on the vegetables. Cover with salsa or dust with garlic powder, then drizzle with honey. Roast at 350 degrees until done, about 40 minutes.

ter doves. Hunters must pattern the birds, understand how doves are using the land around them, and locate feeding areas, loafing areas, roosts and waterholes. Follow doves with binoculars in your car, and you'll soon discover the good hunting areas. After you've figured out how doves are using an area, traditional dove hunting tactics — gunning feeding fields, or pass shooting birds as they move between feeding, loafing and roosting areas — will take birds.

Finding a Place

Most dove hunting is done on private farmland. Getting on private property is not all that hard, if you're willing to work a little. The most effective tool hunters can use is politeness. Particularly useful is an information sheet, which gives your name, address, work and home phone numbers, auto and hunting license information, and other pertinent information (dogs, hunting partners, etc). Sharing this information with a landowner shows that you're willing to take responsibility for your behavior. This could be the door-opener for other hunting, too.

Many state game lands with the right habitat are usually good spots. SGL 169 in Cumberland County, for example, has a series of small sunflower patches planted

to attract doves. By the late season, especially if there is some snow, these areas are easy for doves to reach, usually near roosting cover and other sources of food, such as cut corn and weed seed fields.

Gunning Feeding Areas

By late fall everything is harvested, and feeding areas can be few and far between. Scouting can track areas the birds are using most. Often, the best feeding areas have a mix of sorghum or corn with weed seeds. Late season birds are also more shelter conscious than their early season counterparts. They seek protection against storms and wind, and conserve energy by roosting in or near food sources — especially in wind-cutting clusters of young conifers. Go easy on feeding areas, because it's often better to set up on the flight lane leading into the area rather than the feeding area itself, to prolong the time the birds use the field. Also, give the birds a chance to regroup for several days between hunts.

Decoys

Few Pennsylvania dove hunters use decoys, but I've always found them capable of at least attracting the birds' attention, if not actually drawing birds within range. Six or eight decoys set singly in the limbs of a nearby bare tree, or perched in a feed-

ing position on the ground in a field can add realism, and can give a hunter an edge.

Firepower

Doves are not particularly tough birds, even in heavier winter plumage. For the late season, I like using a 12-gauge choked improved cylinder, or a double choked improved cylinder/modified. I generally use trap loads stuffed with 1 $\frac{1}{8}$ ounces of No. 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ or 8 shot.

Getting the Most from Your Doves

Doves can make a wonderful meal. The meat is dark, like woodcock or waterfowl, and very tasty. Late season dove hunting is usually done under cold weather and won't require the effort to keep game cool that early season hunting demands. I like to pluck doves, to use more of the bird, rather than just remove the breasts as many do. This may be tedious, but it's worth the work. To quickly pluck doves, simply pinch feathers between your thumb and index finger and pull against the grain of the feather pattern. Use a grocery bag to collect the feathers. □

Books in Brief

(Not available from the Game Commission.)

Hunting North America's Upland Birds, Tips and Tactics for Pheasants, Grouse, Quail, Woodcock, Doves, and More, by John D. Taylor, The Lyons Press, 246 Goose Lane, P.O. Box 480, Guilford, CT 06437, www.lyonspress.com, hardcover, 264 pp., \$24.95 plus \$4.48 shipping & handling. Both a practical reference to bird hunting and a collection of hunting reminiscences, the author guides the reader through the wide-ranging terrain of bird hunting, from the forests of the Northeast to the arid expanses of the Southwestern desert country. Taylor points out where bobwhite quail, ruffed grouse, woodcock, turkeys, mourning doves, pheasants, and other gamebirds can be found. Sensitive to conservation issues, Taylor conveys a sense of responsibility for his favorite coverts. Recommendations for guns and gear are included, as well as advice on the best breeds of gun dogs.

New Antler Restrictions: Questions & Answers

By Christopher S. Rosenberry, PhD

PGC Wildlife Biometrician

NEW ANTLER restrictions arrive this fall. By raising the bar from the old restriction, 2 points to an antler or a spike at least 3 inches long, to the new restrictions, 3 or 4 points to an antler, depending on location, more yearling (1½-year-old) bucks should survive into the adult (2½ and older) age class. Reasons for the new antler restrictions have been discussed elsewhere (see 2002-03 Hunting Digest or PGC website, www.pgc.state.pa.us). In this article I address some questions and concerns about the new antler restrictions.

Why have 3- and 4-point areas?

Different areas of Pennsylvania produce larger bucks at younger ages than others. Using four years of antler point data collected from more than 71,000 bucks, we assigned 3- and 4-point restrictions to different areas

based on antler characteristics. The objectives of these new restrictions are designed to protect about half of the yearling bucks from being taken during the hunting season and yet have most adult bucks legal.

Throughout most of the state, a 3-points to a side restriction should satisfy this objective. In western Pennsylvania, however, a 3-point restriction would protect less than a third of all yearling bucks, whereas a 4-points to a side restriction protects more than half. The same is true for some southeastern counties, but the restriction was kept at 3-points to a side because the high human densities and deer-people conflicts play a larger role in our management decisions there.

Why have statewide regulations instead of trying new antler restrictions on smaller, pilot areas?

In answering this question it is important to understand that the fundamental goal of a pilot area is to evaluate a management action to see if it will work across the state. To meet this basic goal, the pilot area must be representative of the entire state. If the pilot area is different

Larissa Rose



Using four years of antler point data collected from more than 71,000 bucks, the PGC deer management team assigned 3- and 4-point restrictions to different areas based on antler characteristics. Here, biologist BRET WALLINGFORD ages a buck at a deer processor.

than the entire state, then results from it have limited value when applied to the entire state.

Therefore, restrictions were implemented statewide (except for Special Regulation counties) instead of pilot areas for three reasons. First, we didn't want to create areas hunters could avoid the first year, because of limited opportunity to harvest a buck, and then flood the second year when more adult bucks would be available. Second, we did not want to encourage the leasing of hunting land here. Generally, hunters lease land to obtain opportunities not available elsewhere. By implementing new antler restrictions statewide, no area is unique. Therefore, we expect leasing of hunting land to be less likely than if we designated local pilot areas that offered increased opportunities to harvest adult bucks. Finally, from research data, we know that if yearling bucks are not shot, they are likely to survive to become adults. So, success of antler restrictions comes down to hunter acceptance and behavior. In essence, with small pilot areas hunters would likely behave differently than if restriction were applied statewide. For these reasons, we favored statewide evaluation of the new antler restrictions.

Why use antler points instead of antler spread?

We used antler points instead of antler spread because points gave us more flexibility. The typical spread restriction is limited to a single criterion that hunters can readily identify in the field. For example, ear tip width of about 14 to 15 inches. The usefulness of this criterion varies greatly across

THE Game Commission went to antler points instead of antler spread restrictions because points give more flexibility.

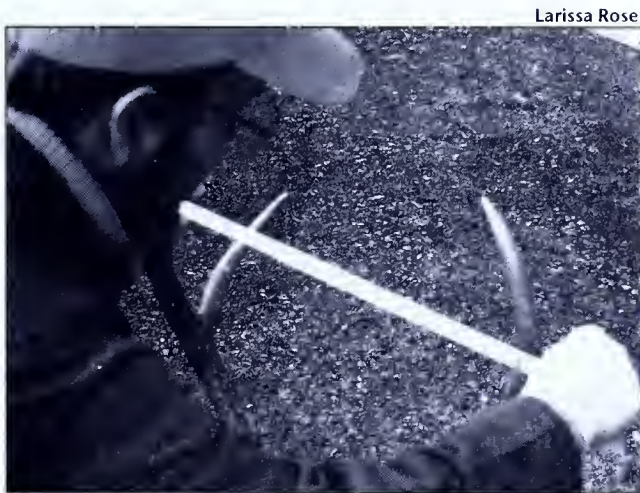
Pennsylvania. In most areas it protects yearling bucks, but in some areas it also protects many adult bucks. By using points, we varied the regulation according to antler characteristics in different areas.

Biologists in some states with point (or spread) restrictions do not favor them. Why have them in PA?

Most states that have some type of spread or point restriction also allow hunters to take more than one buck. In conversations with these biologists, to reduce harvest pressure on yearling bucks they prefer to reduce buck bag limits rather than new antler restrictions. However, in Pennsylvania, with our bag limit of one, reducing the bag limit is not an option. To reduce pressure on our yearling bucks, we chose new antler restrictions where every hunter has a chance to take a buck over the alternative of limiting the number of hunters allowed to take a buck.

Bucks will be shot and left in the woods.

This is the biggest unknown and the primary concern we have with the new antler restrictions. What decision will Pennsylvania hunters make when





Bob D'Angelo

RADIO-TELEMETRY studies of male deer survival will help in evaluating the effects of antler restrictions.

they see a buck this fall? The sum of these decisions will ultimately affect the success or failure of antler restrictions and the public image of our hunters. This is one of the reasons we intend to tag hundreds of bucks over the next three years. Rather than relying on anecdotal reports, we will have survival data on radio-collared bucks. When any is killed, we will know when, where and how, and whether it was a legal buck or not. Sure, mistakes may occur, but regulations have been adopted to handle mistakes with minimal consequences for the hunter.

Smaller yearling bucks will still be small when they're adults.

This statement is based on the assumption that yearling bucks with few points grow into adult bucks with few points, and yearling bucks with more points grow into adult bucks with more points. This assumption is generally not supported by scientific research. A recently published research paper specifically looked at the effect of antler restrictions on antler char-

acteristics of adult bucks. The paper presented a total of 18 different scenarios where antler restrictions and harvest rates varied. Fifteen of the 18 scenarios resulted in no differences in antler characteristics of the surviving bucks at 4.5 years of age.

The scenario that most closely represented our new antler restriction format showed no difference in antler characteristics of adult bucks. In other words, antler characteristics of adult bucks with antler restrictions were the same as those without antler restrictions. Additional data from various deer populations indicate adult bucks generally have 8 to 10 points regardless of the number of antler points they had as yearlings.

Protecting yearling bucks with fewer than 3 or 4 points to an antler will degrade antlers of future bucks.

This statement relates to how well a yearling buck's antlers represent the quality of the buck's genes. Research from Mississippi and Texas — where most antler research has occurred — differ. Results from Mississippi State University suggest that yearling antler points provide little information about the genetics of a buck. On the other hand, research from the Kerr Wildlife Management Area in Texas suggests that yearling antler points do reflect the genetic quality of a buck.

An independent review by an animal breeding and genetics expert concluded that problems existed with the data used by both states and, therefore, that no strong evidence exists for either conclusion. Despite the important role of a buck's mother in his antler characteristics, neither the Mississippi nor Texas results have provided valid estimates of maternal effects on antler growth. Studies specifically designed to evaluate maternal effects are needed. Also the Texas data include high levels of inbreeding — no new deer have been introduced to the deer pens since the 1970s — and many of the deer are related to one buck, "Big Charlie."

A recent review of the scientific literature on genetics in hunted populations concluded that there is little evidence available to suggest that hunting, including selective harvests, has long-term genetic consequences. One reason for this conclusion is the combination of genetics and harvest regulations apparently diminish suspected negative impacts. For example, if antler restrictions did selectively harvest “better” bucks, antlerless harvests are generally nonselective in their removal of “better” or “poorer” does. Thus, a continued mixing of “better” and “poorer” genes throughout the deer herd reduces the amount of change.

We do know that genetics is just one of many factors that determine the number of points on a yearling buck. A buck’s mother and her genes, nutrition, health and other factors affect antler points. All these factors create a situation where there is no strong evidence that the new antler restriction will hurt or improve genetics of Pennsylvania’s deer herd.

Do Pennsylvania hunters support antler restrictions?

When the Game Commission makes management decisions, those decisions affect all hunters, not just a group that reads a certain magazine or belongs to a specific organization. Therefore, the most responsible method of assessing hunter support is through scientific surveys that provide all hunters an equal chance to participate.

Professional wildlife managers must also consider scientific data in favor of anecdotal comments. We regularly hear comments like “none of the hunters I know support antler restrictions.” We also hear comments like “everybody in my camp is in favor of antler restrictions.” Which comment should be considered more? If we listen to those who disagree, those in support are upset. If we listen to those in support, those against are upset.

Rather than consider only surveys of specific groups of hunters or anecdotal

comments, we contracted Pennsylvania State University to conduct a scientific survey. Results of this survey presented at the April 2002 Commission meeting indicated that most Pennsylvania hunters support antler restrictions.

What does the future hold?

This year, the antlered harvest will be smaller, because most yearlings will be protected. In the future, the deer population will contain proportionally more and larger bucks. The population should contain proportionally more bucks because about half of all yearling bucks will be protected and most should survive into the adult age class. The population should contain larger bucks, because the yearling bucks passed up one year will likely be around the next year as larger bodied adults with larger antlers.

Conclusions

As with any change in tradition, new antler restrictions are not without controversies and concerns. Like many hunters, the Game Commission’s deer management team shares concerns about the unknown future. However, after critical evaluation of available information, new antler restrictions were recommended based upon their ability to achieve a rapid and noticeable change in the buck age structure, because of hunter support, and because there’s no scientific evidence that they will be detrimental to Pennsylvania’s deer herd. With the uncertainty associated with changing the antler restriction, we will continue to monitor the large-scale impact of antler restrictions through harvest data collection and hunter surveys; as well as more intensive monitoring of hundreds of individually marked bucks in different areas of the state. □



T-8202

By Al Segar

T-8202 WAS NOT an ordinary turkey. Although the bird no doubt didn't feel special, it helped make turkey hunting what it is today.

Some 35 years ago the turkey range in Pennsylvania was limited. To find the birds, a person usually had to travel to remote areas of game lands. There were no turkey tags, and there wasn't a spring season until 1968. Turkey hunting was far different from what it is today. We didn't have the vast array of hunting videos, calling cassettes, diaphragm calls or camouflage outfits. About the only equipment around was the box call, and not many hunters knew how to use one. Didn't really matter, though, because there weren't many turkey hunters, anyway.

The Game Commission was experimenting then, trying to expand the

range of turkeys, and was releasing birds in areas that showed promise for their survival. If you look at the number of birds today and the number of turkey hunters, to say that the program was a success would be an understatement. As for T-8202, I can only account for about his last three weeks in the program.

I spent most of my spare time at a farm my dad owned in Bradford County. In 1963 we had a buckwheat crop planted on the top section, and on occasion we would drive to it just for something to do and check things out. One day, about three weeks before the opening of small game season, we got a pleasant surprise. There in the field was a wild turkey, the first one I had ever seen. The back side of our fields bordered a large woodlot in an area referred to as Goose Hollow, and it seems that this was one of the areas where the Game Com-

mission had released birds for their experiments, and T-8202 was one of them. This was exciting for me, and I planned to be there on opening day.

As luck would have it, though, in 1963 the opening day was postponed due to drought conditions, the first year I could remember that happening. The season opened on the Wednesday following the scheduled Saturday opener, and I took a vacation day to usher it in. I arrived early in the morning and set up in a hedgerow bordering the field. I was backed up against one of the trees with my

double barrel 12-gauge across my lap. My plan was simply to ambush the bird. As crude as the plan was, it might have worked if I hadn't moved my cramped leg and rustled leaves around my stand. I watched as

the turkey — about 60 yards away — flushed and glided back into the woods. That was my first exposure to just how keen a turkey's senses are, and I've since learned from the experience. Although it was the first time I was outsmarted by a turkey, it wouldn't be my last.

Later that afternoon I set up on the far side of a hay field, about 100 yards from the buckwheat field. This time, Plan B was in effect. If I was going to ambush the turkey, it would be on my terms. I knew nothing about calling, so for my afternoon hunt I was carrying my .30-06.

As I was watching the buckwheat field a little 4-point buck crossed the hay field, along the edge of the hedgerow that separated both fields. I was watching the buck when I noticed a black hump in the

hedgerow. It looked like a small stump, but it appeared to be moving. Looking through the scope I could make out T-8202 feeding up the opposite side of the hedgerow.

I waited patiently and watched as it stepped into a spot where I had a clear shot. When the shot broke the silence the buck just stood there as if nothing happened. I was excited and started toward my prize. The 4-point seemed to have plans of its own, though. He stood his ground, his head poised as if

he were ready to ward off any intrusion into his territory. When I got within 20 yards, however, the buck took off.

T-8202 lay there in a heap, but because the bullet traveled straight through without opening up,

there was little meat damage. As you may have guessed, there on its leg was a metal band with the number T-8202 engraved on it. This I removed, and as requested, I sent notification to the Game Commission. T-8202 became my first wild turkey dinner.

After that I became hooked on turkey hunting. Now, nearly 40 years later, I can honestly say that given a choice I would hunt turkeys before anything else. Now, when I put my tag on a turkey, I often think that it might not have happened if it hadn't been for T-8202 and others like him. So the next time you tag a turkey, think about how hunting license dollars and the Game Commission made the exciting hunt possible. □



Make the Call

By Richard Cramer

Forest County WCO

SUE had often seen the turkeys as they crossed the road near the end of her yard. One day during deer season she was watching the flock from her kitchen window when a small gray car crept down the road and stopped as the last turkey jumped from the road onto the adjoining bank. Sue looked on in disbelief as a gun barrel protruded from the passenger side window and a shot was fired, scattering the turkeys in all directions.

Scenes like this occur all too often. Some slob perpetrates a crime against wildlife in front of witnesses. What happens next most often depends on the actions of the witness. Will our witness shake her head in disgust and continue with her day, or will she take down some information and call the Game Commission region office? Ev-

ery time a wildlife violation is witnessed and no report is made, all ethical sportsmen and our hunting heritage suffer. Ask yourself: Would you make that call? What follows is what Sue did.

Flew Into Action

Sue flew into action as she watched one of the occupants exit the vehicle and climb the bank in the direction the turkeys had gone. She hastily put on a coat and boots and walked outside to confront the violators. The man descended the bank empty-handed as Sue approached. She asked what they were doing as she gathered physical descriptions of the three and wrote down their license plate number on a small piece of paper. Seeing this, the hunters quickly left.

Sue didn't recognize any of them, but she was confident that she had gathered



enough information to give to the Game Commission. She called her father, retired WCO Ernie Taylor, to tell him what had occurred. Ernie told her to go out and see if any of the turkeys had been killed, while he would make some phone calls.

Ernie quickly called and left a message at Deputy Steve Hale's home to inform him of the incident. Sue went outside and found lots of feathers, but no blood and no turkey.

Steve got the message and quickly called Ernie to gather any additional information. Steve then drove to Sue's house and surveyed the scene. He recovered a spent shell, but did not locate any dead turkeys. It appeared that the violators had failed to kill any. The violation, however, was still

considered serious.

Steve returned home and left a message for me to call him. I got the message late that night and called him at his work early the next morning.

He filled me in on the details and gave me all the information, including the name and address for the person the car was licensed to. I knew the owner as a local with a reputation for violating game laws.

WCO Trainee at the time, Justin Klugh, and I then went to visit Sue, to gather any additional information that

may have been missed, and to get the most detailed physical descriptions of those involved. Sue described what had occurred and gave us fairly good descriptions of the three violators. Justin and I then drove to the vehicle owner's home. When we arrived we noticed the small gray car with the license number Sue had written down.

We noticed a light on and heard noise inside a barn, and after knocking on the door we were invited in. We found three individuals processing a deer. The owner of the vehicle, Joe, his brother Layman and Layman's son were all looking at us intently as we entered the dimly lit barn.

We introduced ourselves and quickly separated the suspects. Justin took Joe outside to speak with him, and I talked to Layman and his son in the barn. I asked Layman what had occurred the day before on Poland

A gun barrel protruded from the passenger side window and a shot was fired, scattering the turkeys in all directions.



Hill Road when he was riding in Joe's vehicle. He looked at me with a flushed face, quickly looked away and said that he had shot at a deer there but had missed. He then said that because Joe had a disabled person's permit to use a vehicle as a blind that he thought it was okay to shoot from the car.

At that point I stopped Layman and told him that he was digging quite a hole for himself and his brother, because I knew exactly what had occurred. I looked him in the eye and told him that he had fired at turkeys and not at a deer, and that no one except the person holding the permit could possess a loaded firearm in the vehicle, and then only when the vehicle was parked and removed from the traveled portion of the roadway. The permit does not entitle anyone to travel the roads in search of game. It is not a license to road hunt.

Layman looked down and then at his son. He looked at me and said that I had it right, but that his son had just got in from Chicago and was not in the car with them when he had shot at the turkeys. Another hunter from a nearby camp was in the vehicle with

them, but he was in the back and did nothing. I thanked him for his honesty and went outside to see how Justin was coming along with Joe.

Justin had his pad out and was writing down the story Joe was relating. Joe and Layman had obviously gotten a story together about shooting at a deer instead of the turkeys. I listened for a short time and then told Joe that he had better tell officer Klugh the truth, because his brother had told me the whole story. Joe looked towards the barn, sighed and told Justin the complete story.

Charges were filed at the District Justice office in Tionesta. Layman entered a plea of guilty to road hunting (using a vehicle to hunt from) and to attempting to take turkeys in closed season. Joe entered a plea of guilty to assisting in the attempt to take turkeys in closed season. I also informed Joe that I would institute proceedings to have his disabled person's permit revoked, due to the illegal activities he had engaged in under the auspices of the permit.

This case was easy to prosecute due to the observations and actions of a concerned citizen. We can all take actions such as these to help prevent wildlife crimes from going unpunished. □

Deer Hunters: Reminder

For the upcoming deer seasons, to be legal, an antlered deer must have 3 points or better on a side in most of the state. In Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Crawford, Erie, Indiana, Lawrence, Mercer, Washington and Westmoreland counties, 4 points or better to a side is required.

EXCEPTIONS: Junior license holders, disabled hunters with a permit to use a vehicle and Pennsylvania residents on active duty in the U.S. Armed Services are excepted; senior license holders are not.

Also excepted are all hunters in the Special Regulations Area counties of Allegheny, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia. For these exceptions, the previous antler restrictions of one antler of three or more inches in length, or one antler with at least two points apply. See this year's hunting and trapping digest for complete details.

Lady Luck Pheasants

By Jay P. Clymer III

IT WAS the night before the 2000 regular small game season opener, and my buddy Mike and I were scheduled to leave for a deep-sea fishing trip the next day. Gale force winds were forecasted, however, so I called Mike to discuss our plans. "What do you think?"

"Doesn't look good," he replied. "I'll call the captain around 10. Let's get up early and chase some pheasants," he commented.

"Good idea," I confirmed, "Where do you want to go?"

"How about Rileyville?" I asked.

"I don't know," he said, "that's about an hour ride. What if the fishing trip is on?" he responded.

"Good thought," I added, "Let's hit the park." I was referring to Lackawanna State Park, about 10 minutes from where we lived.

"Yep," he answered, "They always put some birds out over there. I'll pick you up at six."

Six o'clock came fast, but Mike brought coffee and doughnuts to take the edge off of a short night.

We drove to the park, parked the car, and began to reminisce about past opening days. "What time does it get light?" I asked.

"About 6:30, I think," Mike replied. We walked slowly up a trail to the top of a familiar hill to await daylight. Mike carried his trusty Winchester Model

1200 12-gauge, while I had a new Winchester Model 1300 in 20-gauge. As a boy I hunted pheasants with a 16-gauge, so I was a little dubious about the power of this 20.

When shooting time arrived we loaded our guns and then noticed hunters strung out in the fields below us. "Where should we start?" Mike asked.

"How about that strip of cover ahead? It's narrow enough for us to handle," I answered. As I watched the army of hunters fan out, my thoughts turned to productive opening days when I hunted with my dad around Lancaster and Harrisburg. I didn't expect as much this day. But we hadn't gone more than 50 yards before my daydreaming was interrupted by a flurry of beating wings in front of me. A hen



bird got airborne. I must have forgotten why I was there, because I didn't even raise my shotgun (hens are legal in this section of the state). Mike must have been perplexed, too, because he waited for me to react. "Shoot!" I yelled. I had thrown his timing off, though, and he missed. The bird landed a couple hundred yards away in another patch of cover. We continued working the field and then, suddenly, Mike stepped out of the brush, raised his gun and fired.

"What'd you see?" I asked.

"Missed another hen bird," he answered.

When a third hen catapulted out of the goldenrod, I was ready. I brought the Winchester to my shoulder, snapped off the safety, wheeled and fired. My first shot was behind the bird, but I pumped the action, continued my swing and

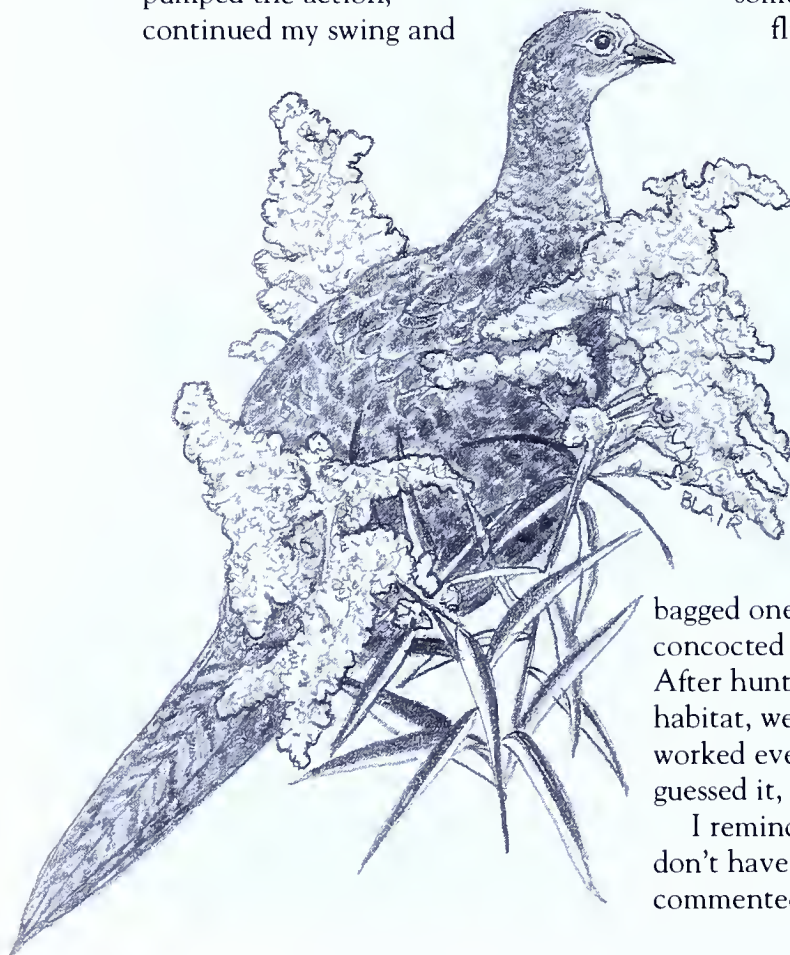
touched off another. Mike shot at the exact same instant and the bird folded. I picked it up and handed it to Mike. About half a dozen more steps and hen number four was in the air. I knocked the bird down, but it hit the ground running. I soon caught up to it, however, and now we each had a bird. We were both so excited that anything else would just be icing on the cake. Lady Luck had smiled on us as we had obviously picked the right strip of cover. I also had lost all reservations about my "little" 20-gauge.

We continued on to the area where the first pheasant had landed and, despite thoroughly working the cover, it eluded us. A gang of hunters was coming up behind us, and we stopped to talk to another hunter who had two English setters; he hadn't seen a thing. We decided to hunt a strip of woods next to the fields, to get out of the way of the group of hunters. We tramped through some excellent cover, but didn't flush any more birds. We needed a new game plan.

Then something occurred to me. Some years ago, purely by luck, we discovered an overlooked spot in the park. We had watched a pheasant land on a marshy peninsula that juts out into the upper end of Lackawanna Lake. It looks more like a duck hunting spot, and while trying to flush that bird, we put up four others and

bagged one. The following year, we concocted a brilliant opening day plan. After hunting more conventional habitat, we pulled on our hip boots and worked every inch of that marsh. You guessed it, not a bird.

I reminded Mike about the spot. "We don't have our hip boots," he casually commented.



"I think the lake is down. It should be fine," I said. The only access is along a narrow deer trail. As we fought through alders Mike gave me that "Who's idea was this?" look. When we got to the marsh, Mike went right and I went left. I took about three steps and buried my leg up to the calf in a muddy hole. A boot full of water was not so bad on this warm day, however. Several more steps and the other boot was full of water. It soon became apparent that the water level was not down. "Let's back off and hunt elsewhere," I said.

As we gingerly worked our way along, a cackling rooster erupted at our feet. The bird flew straight away from me and to the left of Mike. We both fired at the same time again and the bird dropped like a stone. We chuckled as Mike said,

"The good news is that we got the bird; the bad news is that he's in the open water. Who's gonna get him?"

"How are your feet?" I asked.

"Got one wet foot and one dry," Mike replied.

"I've got two boots full; he's closer to me anyway."

I waded through knee-deep water and found the pheasant behind a clump of marsh grass. I grabbed the bird, shook it off and placed it in my vest.

On our way back to the car we commented about how Lady Luck had smiled on us. As it turned out, the fishing trip was canceled, but the morning spent pheasant hunting with a good friend more than made up for it. Besides, roast pheasant would be the ultimate reward. □

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Following the Wanderer

By Lori Richardson

PGC Outreach Coordinator



Joe Kosack

AUTHOR with young peregrine hatched on a 15th floor ledge of the Rachel Carson Building in Harrisburg.

IT'S A CRISP, fall morning. Once again, I find myself checking in with a friend that I have gotten quite attached to. I check in with her almost every day. She is quite a wanderer and I never know where she's going to turn up. I don't keep track of her by any ordinary means, such as a telephone or email. I can touch base with her every 12 minutes — by satellite.

My friend is a female peregrine falcon. We met earlier this year under rather precarious circumstances, and in order to appreciate where she's going, it helps to know where she came from.

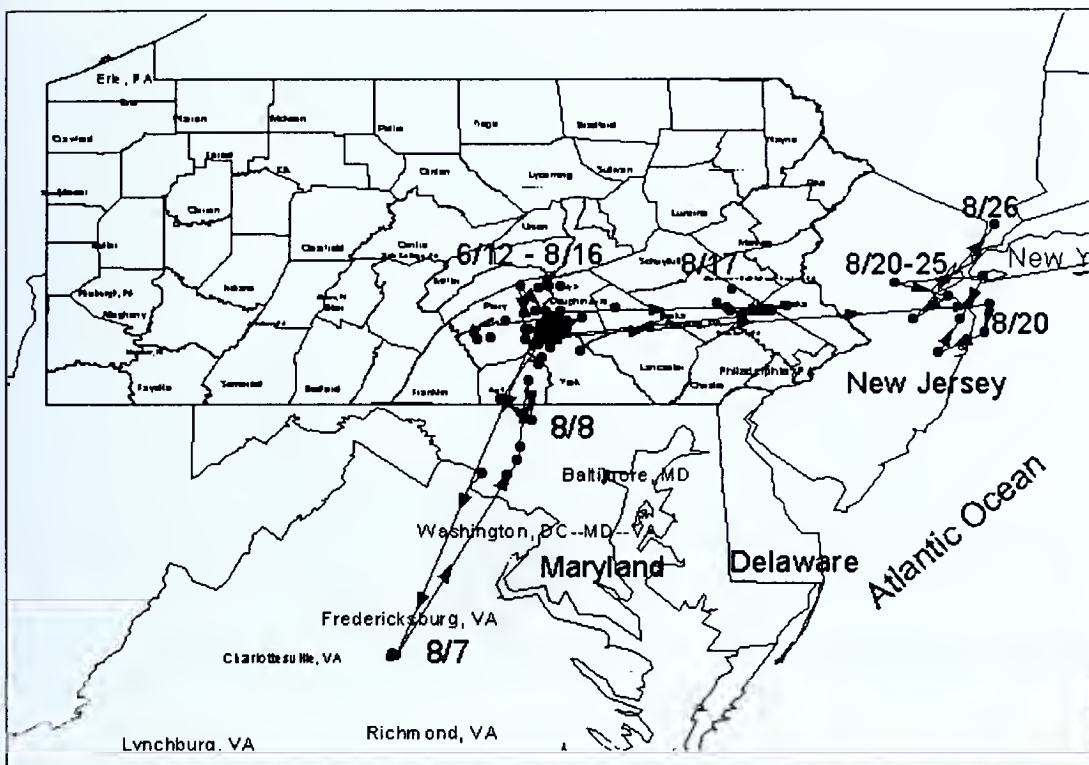
Her story begins in the late 1980s when peregrines first returned to nest in Pennsylvania after disappearing

from the state nearly three decades prior. This demise was due largely to the effects of DDT. Following a massive reintroduction program in the 1970s, '80s and '90s, returning falcons began nesting near Philadelphia in the mid-1980s, in Pittsburgh in 1990, and in Harrisburg in 1996, on the very ledge where I met this falcon.

In March, her parents began courtship rituals that lead to the meticulous tending of four eggs laid in a shallow gravel depression on a 15th floor ledge of the Rachel Carson Building. In May, those eggs hatched into four scrawny, wobbly, birds with huge mouths and endless appetites. Through the tireless efforts of their parents, the hatchlings grew at a rapid pace. By the end of the month, their legs were fully grown. The birds still had some filling out to do, and it would be a few weeks before they'd grow into all their feathers and fly, but they were the perfect age to band.

Leg banding is a traditional method of marking and tracking birds. Before it is released back into the wild, each bird receives a unique set of color-coded bands that distinguish it from other birds. Later, when falcon watchers identify a band, they can use the numbers to find out where and when that particular bird was banded. For falcons, that is often the site where they were born.

On May 30, a safety crew arrives early to secure harnesses for the biologist that will have to venture out on the ledge and retrieve the young falcons. A veterinarian, a photographer, a registered bander/wildlife rehabilitator and two assistants cram



HERE'S the flight path tracked by satellite of the last peregrine to "fly the coup" that was hatched on the Rachel Carson Building in Harrisburg. This male peregrine traveled around the Harrisburg area for a long time, went to Virginia for just a couple of days, on to Montgomery County, back to Harrisburg, and then on to New York City. Another website, besides the Game Commission's, worth checking out to track the whereabouts of peregrine falcons is www.argosinc.com.

into the small office that provides access to the ledge with the safety crew. It's a tight fit and several more people watch from beyond the glass panes of the office walls and remote cameras permanently installed on the ledge. I dreamily wish falcons nested outside of my office.

One by one the young falcons are captured. They protest noisily and the parents express their objection by dive-bombing the biologist with piercing, repetitious cries. Once inside, the hatchlings are examined by a veterinarian before receiving their own unique set of bands. I hold one of the young birds while she is being examined and banded. I'm careful to keep a gentle hold on each foot, and glad she doesn't know quite how to use those sharp talons yet. Her eyes seem to stare right through me and I wonder what she thinks of all this.

Downstairs a press conference is taking place with a room full of eager elementary students; three of the young falcons are processed there. My falcon friend has been returned to the ledge sporting this season's hottest, new, alpha-numeric, red and black, aluminum bracelets. From now on she'll be known among falcon watchers as Y/3. Seeing one of their young back on the ledge seems to calm the parents a bit, but they are still annoyed. The whole episode takes less than an hour, and we sneak off quietly to let the falcon family reunite in peace high above the hubbub of the city.

Banding has merely scratched the surface to understanding the dispersal process of peregrine falcons. We know that falcons born in Pennsylvania

have set up nesting territories in cities as far as Ohio, Michigan and Ontario. What we don't know is where they've spent the two years between leaving the nest as a juvenile and establishing a nest as an adult. Where do they go? How long do they stay there? New technology is giving us a chance to find out.

By mid-June the young falcons have been testing their flight skills for about two weeks. The banding crew is back at the 15th floor ledge, but with a new mission. We are going to catch two of the fledglings and custom fit them with designer backpacks. Not Calvin Kline or LL Bean, these are much cooler and much more expensive than any they've ever made. These backpacks will be "talking" to satellites.

Each pack weighs 18 grams, about two percent of the bird's body weight. About the size of an 8-stick pack of gum, they're attached to a small flexible antenna. A tailor-fitted, neoprene harness will fasten the pack to its falcon host. Each unit houses a transmitter, a microprocessor, and a miniature solar cell used for power. These high-tech knapsacks are programmed to send a signal to space every 12 minutes.

Satellites orbiting the earth pick up the signals. At the speed of light they calculate the latitude and longitude of the transmitter. Three satellites reading a signal simultaneously can determine its location on earth within 500 feet. They can even tell us if the bird is moving or stationary. That's pretty amazing stuff.

So, now we know where the falcons were born and if everything goes as planned, we'll learn where they're going to spend the next two years. By that time they may be setting up nesting territories of their own as mature adults somewhere. But all this neat in-

formation won't be justly put to use if people don't know about it.

To date, more than 250 teachers have attended peregrine falcon workshops sponsored by the Game Commission's Project WILD. The most recent workshops have been co-sponsored by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), which occupies the section of the Rachel Carson Building where the falcons are nesting. Participants meet live falcons, learn about peregrine adaptations and current peregrine research from biologists, and participate in activities they can do with their students. Each educator receives lots of background information and great materials to use in their classroom.

Back at school, teachers and students can follow the peregrines' travels using the Internet. Students can see where the falcons have been and where they are now by visiting the maps on our website. They can use the information to find out how long it takes peregrines to travel distances, where they spend the winter, how long they stay on their wintering grounds and when they start to make the trip back to nesting territory. They can also visit DEP's Falcon Cam this spring to check in with live coverage of the nest on the 15th floor. I wish my biology classes had been so hip.

About eight weeks after they began to fly, our falcons flew the coup and headed out to face the world independently. We've been following them, as well as two falcons fitted with backpacks in Pittsburgh, since June. By mid-August they'd traveled to Philadelphia, Princeton, Atlantic City, Allegheny Refuge, New York, Connecticut and Virginia. They may be headed for South America, and they can really lay down some distance when they get going. So, I'll keep checking in on them, anxious to know where these Pennsylvania peregrines are wandering.

To follow Pennsylvania's peregrines, visit our website www.pgc.state.pa.us. Click on Wildlife and then on Peregrine Falcon. □



Squirrels, Cornfields and Hedgerows

By James J. Corsetti, Jr.

SMALL GAME in farmland areas can be hard to find these days. Wild pheasants are nearly nonexistent; stocked birds on game lands and Farm-Game projects is the best bet for ringnecks, and finding rabbits depends on finding a farm with adequate cover. However, if you hunt farms with woodlots, hedgerows, corn and soybean fields, you have a potential hotspot for squirrels.

Squirrels are one of the bright spots in small game hunting today. They are plentiful, relatively easy to hunt, and are a perfect quarry for youngsters. You can make hunting for squirrels as easy or as challenging as you like, and you can use a shotgun or a .22 rimfire rifle to take them.

While I prefer to hunt squirrels in woodlots, by sitting next to a nice tree and

waiting for them to come to me, sometimes I take a more active approach. That's when I hunt hedgerows and the borders of cornfields.

In many instances hedgerows connect woodlots and wooded areas near streams with other woodlots. The squirrels — as well as other wildlife — use the hedgerows as “highways” between choice habitat areas. In addition, hedgerows usually contain prime habitat, and depending upon how wild they get, they will have a variety of food as well as bedding areas and dens for wildlife. If hedgerows contain oak, hickory and other nut producing trees, that's more food for the squirrels, and chances are good that they'll have dens and nests located there, too.

Hedgerows are also important because they not only provide shelter and food, but they border other important food sources. At different times during the day, particularly the late morning and late afternoon, you can find squirrels feeding on corn and soybeans. Crop damage blamed on deer can often be attributed to squirrels, so obtaining permission to hunt squirrels on private property is usually easy.

I discovered this kind of hunting many years ago, while groundhog hunting. At that time the use of .22 rimfires in the Special Regulations Areas was not permitted, so it was a shotgun or bow.

I'd spend my summer Saturdays prowling the hedgerows, looking for groundhog burrows, and I usually spotted many squirrels. It didn't take long to realize that these areas held squirrels, plenty of squirrels. With the decrease in pheasants, it becomes more prudent to stick near the hedgerows, not only in search of rabbits, which can sometimes be found there, but for squirrels as well.

Basically, I use the same procedure for squirrels that I do for groundhogs. I walk slowly along the edge of the field between the crops and the hedgerow and stop periodically to see if any squirrels are moving ahead. Unlike rabbit hunting, though, where I would be kicking around in the brushpiles and briar patches, I move stealthfully and keep my movements to a minimum. Also, with rabbits and groundhogs, you can usually just look ahead on the ground for your quarry, but with squirrels, they can be anywhere and every-

where. They can be high in a tree, on the ground, or anywhere in between. Sometimes, particularly if they hear you, they may come bolting right out of a cornfield or soybean field, looking for the safety of the nearest tree or den hole. If you take your time, the chance of spotting a squirrel before it sees or hears you is good.

For hunting squirrels in hedgerows, I prefer a 12- or 16-gauge shotgun. I enjoy using a .22 rifle when hunting in

woodlots or in big woods,

but I do not recommend a .22 for

hedgerow hunting. Many farm

areas are flat and may not offer a

proper backstop for a rifle bullet.

Besides, squirrels are usually on the

move in hedgerows, making the shotgun a

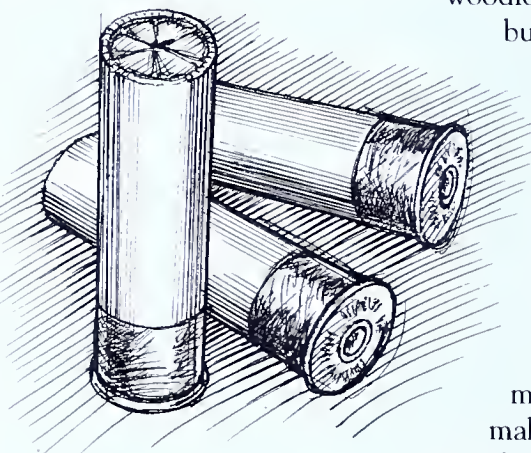
natural choice. I like heavy

loads with 4, 5 or 6 shot. Squirrels are tough, and to kill them cleanly requires a heavy payload.

You can also stand-hunt for squirrels in hedgerows. On one farm I hunt, a hedgerow surrounds its various crop fields, and oftentimes I just sit in a corner and let the squirrels come to me. Sometimes I use a squirrel call and have good success.

When it comes to tablefare, farm-fed squirrels are superb. However, cleaning squirrels can be tough. The easiest way I've found is to cut off the head, tail and feet with a sharp knife, cut the skin width-wise on the middle of the back, and peel the hide like removing a glove. Field-dress the squirrel and wash off all remaining hairs. I quarter squirrels, roll the pieces in flour and fry them in olive oil. It's a great way to end a day of hunting.

If you enjoy hunting farmland and want to bring home game, try hunting squirrels in the hedgerows; it's simple but exciting. □



"Recognize what is before your eyes, and what is hidden will be revealed to you."

--The Gospel of Thomas

Some New Tools

By Larissa Rose

PGC Information Writer

Photos by the author

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION OFFICERS are faced with challenges every day. Rich Palmer, Mike



THE GAME COMMISSION is a national leader in the field of wildlife forensics — a fact which hasn't gone unnoticed. This past spring, a grant from the Conservation Law Enforcement Chiefs Association and support from the Conservation Officers of Pennsylvania Association allowed the PGC to present a training course to 23 officers from nine states in the Northeast. Above, one of the officers demonstrates electrical stimulus, which allows time of death to be estimated.

Doherty and Tim Grenoble have been trying, since 1994, to make one part of a WCO's job a little less challenging. The three recognized the need for wildlife forensics training, and have since given 5-day initial training, and 3-day in-service training to all officers. The methods taught by Palmer, Game Commission Law Enforcement Training Supervisor, and Dauphin County WCO Doherty and Cumberland County WCO Grenoble have proven their worth time and time again. Following are some examples of how Game Commission officers have used different forensics tactics to solve wildlife violations.

One of the most common uses of wildlife forensics is to determine time of death of an animal, including deer, bear, turkeys and waterfowl. There are several different methods used to establish time of death, and more than one test is often done, to corroborate findings. The most commonly known is rigor mortis. This method uses the amount of flexibility in the joints to determine how long the animal has been dead. Also, the temperature the carcass was kept at, as well as the handling can affect rigor.

Another test is electrical stimulus, which causes muscles to respond to a low frequency electrical impulse. The longer the animal has been dead, the less the

muscles will twitch when an electric current is touched to it.

As soon as an animal dies, its body temperature begins to drop. By taking the temperature from several different areas of the body, officers can estimate how long the animal has been dead.

DNA evidence is often in the news, but its probably used more often than you might think in wildlife crimes. Often times, an officer will believe a person has blood on their clothing from an illegally killed animal, but the suspect will claim that he cut himself or, perhaps, was butchering hogs. Not that long ago, there wasn't much an officer could do, but today a WCO can take a sample of the blood and have it analyzed to determine whether the blood came from a human, pig or deer.



Part of the course focused on tire track and footprint evidence, and their importance in tying a suspect to a crime scene. Here WCO TIM GRENOBLE demonstrates how to cast a tire track using dental stone, commonly used for making dental impressions.

DNA can also be used to prove where an animal was killed. Just last year, a WCO used DNA evidence to prove a man had shot a bear in its den on the first day of the 2000 bear season. This was done by matching hair and blood found in the den, with a tooth taken from the bear at the check station. Without this evidence, there would have been no way to prove that the bear brought into the check station was the same one that was in the den.

A lesser-known use of DNA evidence involves a more in-depth analysis of a sample. For instance, a poaching suspect might have deer meat in his freezer and say that it was all from one animal. Now, through DNA analysis, an officer can have the meat tested to find out if it came from one or several different deer. The same tests can also be done to match meat to a gut pile left at a poaching scene, or heads and hides that have been tossed over banks. DNA tests can also be used to identify venison in bologna that is being sold — an illegal practice the Game Commission takes seriously.

Even something as simple as a tire track or as small as a footprint can be used to solve wildlife crimes. Tracks can link suspects and vehicles to crime scenes. In one case where deer were being poached, officers followed tire tracks into a field and found where a deer had been field-dressed. The officers photographed the tire tracks and footprints, then made casts of the tracks using dental stone. Once a subject was identified, the pictures and casts were used as evidence to obtain a search warrant of the suspect's house and vehicle, and his boots were seized and sent to a lab to be compared to the casts. Tracks can be left in mud, dirt, snow — one suspect was convicted using a track on a grape leaf.

Bullets are often a key piece of evidence in an investigation. Ballistic analysis can tell an investigator many things about a crime, including the caliber and the types of guns that fire them. Shells can be linked to firearms, even unfired shells, by match-



WCOs MIKE DOHERTY and TIM GRENOBLE show officers how to determine from what angle a bullet penetrated a deer. This evidence, when combined with bullet recovery, will help estimate where a shooter may have been located.

ing extractor marks. In one case where a deer was killed illegally with a muzzleloader and the bullet was retrieved, muzzleloader balls were taken from a suspect. Tests on the lead ball proved that the bullet found in the deer came from the same batch as the balls in the suspect's possession.

Another forensic method involving bullets deals with shooting incident reconstruction. There are computer programs available to calculate the trajectory of different caliber bullets fired from different firearms. In hunting related shooting incidents, reconstruction can help determine just how a suspect was involved. Could he really not see the other person through the brush when he shot? Another way this program comes in handy is when trying to figure out if game was shot from a roadway.

One of the least attractive tactics officers use is forensic entomology. This method uses the flies and maggots on a carcass to help determine how long it has been dead. Several factors enter into this study, including temperature and the fact that the flies that produce the maggots don't fly at night. Dead and live samples of flies, egg masses and maggots are taken from the animal and sent to a lab to determine what stage the insects are in. This information, when

compared with the temperature over the previous days, will give a pretty good idea of how long the animal has been dead, allowing officers to link suspects to the scene of the crime.

In the past, a person often had to be caught red-handed to be convicted of a wildlife crime. With today's methods and technology, however, officers can rely on evidence,

much of which goes unseen by the untrained eye, to convict a suspect of a crime. □



An important tool in solving wildlife crimes is forensic entomology. Above, MIKE DOHERTY collects a blow fly from a carcass. Samples of live and dead flies, egg masses and maggots are analyzed to determine how long the animal has been dead.



The Deer Meant Everything

By Ralph C. Scherder, III

AROUND NOON the falling snow began to slacken and the wind died down a bit — the afternoon was almost pleasant. I still couldn't feel my fingers, nose or ears, though, as I poured a cup of hot chocolate. As I reached for a sandwich I spotted movement to my right, and before I could set the cup aside, eight deer climbed out of the deep ravine and bolted across the mountain flat I'd been watching. Hot chocolate went everywhere as I tossed the cup aside and leveled my rifle just in time to see spikes on the last deer, but it was too late — they'd made it to the brush. All I could do was sit there and contemplate the missed opportunity.

It was the first day of buck season (before the concurrent season) and the woods were full of hunters. Chances at a buck would be few and far between. I cursed the deer and myself, as I replaced the empty cup on the thermos. No more hot chocolate for me. It seemed every time I reached for my thermos a deer came by and caught me off guard.

I was 14 years old and had yet to harvest a whitetail. My Uncle Joe shot a 6-point that morning and told me to sit with him in his spot the rest of the afternoon. The cold weather kept the hunters moving, which kept the deer moving. Every half hour or so deer popped up out of the ravine and crossed the flat in the open woods. The flat was a whitetail highway, but I had no rifle rest: Any shooting would have to be offhand.

I waited intently, turning at every snapping twig and falling leaf, wondering if it was a deer. Cradling the .257 Roberts, I sat perched on the large stump while the snow resumed falling. It was now late afternoon and the woods became dim. Time was running out, but then it happened, as it always happens, when you least expect it. I glanced to my right and saw a deer moving across the flat. I saw his yellowed rack before I even raised the scope. I quickly centered the crosshairs behind his shoulder, swung with him and squeezed off two shots before he ducked over the edge and disappeared into the ravine.

I sat there a moment, hands trembling like aspen leaves, feeling like a rock and roll band was playing a live concert inside me. I don't remember leaving my stand, but the next thing I knew I was at the spot where I'd last seen the deer. There were so many tracks in the snow I couldn't tell them apart. I was young and inexperienced. Where to begin? I looked up and noticed Uncle Joe plowing towards me. His eyes were wild with excitement. "Was that you who shot?" he asked.

"Yes," I said.

He hurried over and immediately saw my frustration. He knew I wanted a deer more than anything. "Do you think you hit him?" he asked.

"I'm not sure. It was an offhand shot and he was moving," I shrugged. "I don't know. I might have."

Uncle Joe rubbed his beard and glanced back to where we had been sitting and then at the trail curving down into the ravine. Without a word he bent over and carefully studied the snow. We came to a spot where a single set of tracks veered to the left. They were large tracks and we followed them along the hill. Uncle Joe paused at one place, blinked, looked closer as if double-checking what he saw. "Blood," he pointed. The adrenaline rush came on again as I leaned beside him and saw the small drop of dark blood on the white snow. "You hit 'em, Buddy!" he exclaimed. He pumped a fist. "These are his tracks all right." He slipped on a pair of gloves and gave a monstrous grin. "Let's go get him."

We continued on and entered a thick stand of hemlocks where visibility wasn't more than 20 yards in any direction. We stalked slowly, pushing aside the branches, creeping as quietly as possible. Uncle Joe

stopped abruptly in front of me. "There he is." Less than 20 yards away the buck lifted and turned its head toward us. I froze. In that brief instant every detail of his antlers and coat were branded in my mind.

There were eight points, spread almost the width of his ears, and one side of his rack had longer tines than the other. He looked majestic: an old monarch that had eluded hunters until finally meeting his destiny at the hands of a 14-year-old. When he jumped up I noticed two white blotches of fur at the base of his neck. I could see the distinct color patterns on his face and brisket, and then I realized he was running away. Uncle Joe dropped to the ground and yelled for me to shoot. I pulled up, centered the crosshairs on his neck and fired, furiously working the bolt. The hemlocks were so thick, though, I knew I'd missed.

We hurried to where he'd bedded and found large puddles of dark blood. If it had been any day other than the first day of the season, we would have let the deer bed down again and pursue him after a long wait. With so many hunters around, though, we knew it was only a matter of time until the deer crossed in front of someone.

Also, with snow falling, tracks and blood would soon be covered.



The excitement flared in Uncle Joe's eyes. I'd never seen him so fired up with determination. He wanted this buck as much as I did. It was no longer just my deer — it was our deer. "We're gonna get him, Buddy," he said, slapping my shoulder. My insides twisted with uncertainty. "Come on," he said. I was already on his heels, plowing through the dense hemlocks.

The deer moved slower now. I could barely see its outline stumbling through the snow-laden branches ahead of us, but he never offered a shot. We followed the tracks deeper into the ravine, which by now I was convinced was bottomless. I heard a nearby rushing stream as we descended farther, over fallen trees and through thick brush. The tracks passed within 20 feet of another hunter in the pines, but the man said he'd seen nothing all day. Without explaining what we were doing, we continued on to the stream. The tracks ended there.

We scoured the banks for tracks but saw nothing. Uncle Joe grabbed my arm and told me to listen. I could hear the faintest splashing of water, like someone walking in the stream. Uncle Joe spun me around. "There!" he hollered. About 50 yards upstream the deer had climbed out of the water and was moving away on the far bank. When I fired that final time I didn't feel the recoil or hear the roar of the gun. I could only hear the snow falling through the hemlocks and see the buck reach the top of a bank and then tumble backward into the rushing stream. Water sprayed and then settled around the motionless deer.

Uncle Joe slapped me on the back and I breathed again. He gathered me in

a giant bear hug and let out a whoop that I can still hear when I think about this hunt. "You got him!" he hollered. He let me down and then hugged me again, squeezing the tears out of me.

We rushed to the deer, and for a moment I simply watched as the water flowed around him. I grabbed him by an antler beam and tugged him to shore. As I filled out my tag and attached it to his ear and started to field-dress the buck, hunters poured in around us from all directions. They talked and laughed and asked to hear the story.

I let Uncle Joe tell the condensed version of the tale. Finally, the hunters vanished back into the pines for the remaining hour of shooting time, and it was just Uncle Joe and me. "Well," he said, rubbing his beard at the thought of dragging the deer up the steep slope. The many fallen trees and brush piles made it look twice as steep. We'd have to lift the deer over each of them individually. He grabbed the right beam and flashed that same fiery glance of determination. "Ready when you are."

I shouldered the unloaded rifle and took hold of the left side. I smiled and nodded and we began the long climb out of the ravine, tugging and grunting, and tugging and grunting some more.

"Dandy buck you got here," he said, heaving the deer over a fallen tree.

I grinned at Uncle Joe. "No, dandy buck we got." □

THINK OCTOBER, and color comes to mind — and it is with our mind, and not our eyes that we know color. Color is not always what it seems. The white tail of a deer is not white, but clear. Light breaks up and scatters in the hollow, air-filled hair, and we see it as white. Ditto for snow and snow geese, and falling raindrops.

October's pumpkin, too, is not yellow. It is the fugitive rays of yellow light not absorbed by the pumpkin that reflect to our eyes, and is determined by our mind, as being yellow. Other creatures may see the pumpkin as a pale gray-green, or pinkish-brown.

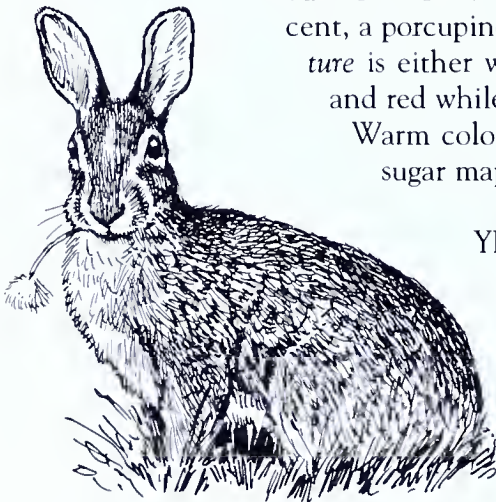
What looks like a sodden, winter field to us appears as a strip mall of fast food eateries to a kestrel. Kestrels know what fields to hunt because they can see the ultra-violet light reflected in the urine trails of meadow voles.

Every species perceives color in the way that works best for them. Consider the owls: colorblind because they have no need to realize color in their dusky world. We may be able to see millions of colors, but waterfowl can detect billions. For us, though, color goes beyond a need to literally define and survive in the world. It is tied firmly to our psyches. Color can evoke emotional responses, is connected to moods and imagination, and has symbolic connotations.

My large wooden palette hangs on a studio wall. I've had it a long time, and it smells of linseed oil and has the patina of an antique gunstock. I can recall certain paintings in some of the dried pigments that remain on the palette, but more, I am reminded of the inspirations for those works. Color not only conjures certain subjects, but sometimes also suggests deeper themes from the broader palette of Penn's Woods.

SOME SIMPLE COLOR terminology could be of value. *Hue* is the actual color of anything. It's identified by a common name such as blue or yellow-green. *Chroma* is the degree of vividness of a color. Color *value* is the percentage of lightness on a scale of grays from black to white, black being 100 percent. A bluebird would be around 25 percent in value, a winter whitetail 40 percent, a porcupine about 80 percent on that scale. Color *temperature* is either warm or cool. Warm colors lean towards yellow and red while cool colors are associated with blue and green. Warm colors advance, cool colors recede; a yellow-orange sugar maple growing next to a blue spruce appears closer.

YELLOW IMAGES FROM the seasons flash by. April's dandelions dot the lawn — and much to my delight, are a preferred treat of our big resident cottontail. May brings scores of warblers, many marked in brilliant yellow, like blinking lights strung on the dark pines. Another light show soon follows, the yellow-green phosphorescent tailings of fireflies on warm



June evenings. Deep summer, and dozens of yellow swallowtails gently flutter above the violet butterfly bush, rising and falling, again and again, as if yanked aloft by an invisible string.

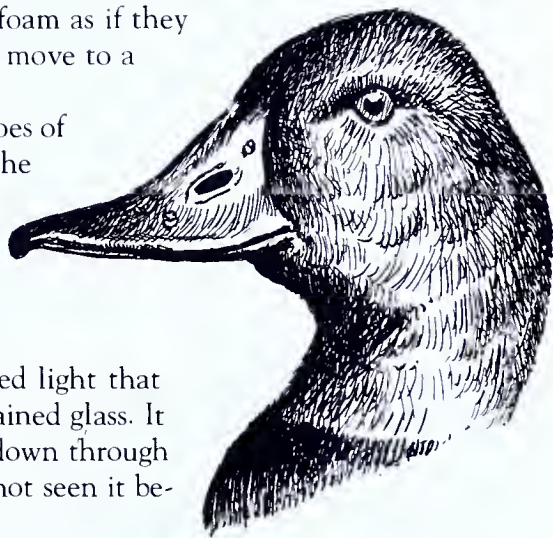
At summer's end a flock of goldfinches swarm the black-eyed Susans. Together, the birds and flowers form a moving yellow and black mass, the birds twittering as they eat. Looking closer, the finches are a brilliant, pure yellow while the flowers are yellow-orange.

October brings a tidal wave of yellow foliage. Goldenrod borders country roads, bright as the yellow line painted on the macadam. Buck rubs shine like highway markers. Even the frosty night is awash in the thin saffron light of a Harvest Moon. Just when the palette of the year shifts to more subtle hues, the delicate yellow blossoms of witch hazel decorate the November uplands.

But where can we find our warmest hue in winter? Amber beech leaves linger into early spring, fading to the palest yellow. The fox squirrel's coat is trimmed in maize, the same hue as the corn it eats. Evening grosbeaks sport handsome gradients of yellow, and tundra swans have a yellow teardrop shape on the lore, the area between beak and eye.

I remember most fondly the day of the yellow sky. It was during deer season, and I was far back in a favorite woods. It was raining hard in fits and starts, and a fickle wind swirled, warm then cool. The exposed roots of the black, knotted trees were lathered with foam as if they were straining to break free of the earth and move to a place more civil.

Later in the day I shot a deer, and the echoes of my shot continued on in a peal of thunder. The low-sweeping sky was very dark and the belly of the deer seemed especially white in the dim hollow. While dressing the deer I stopped when the entire hollow was suddenly bathed in a rich, unearthly yellow light. It was not direct sunlight, but a filtered light that illuminated the hollow, like light through stained glass. It was created, perhaps, by sunlight bouncing down through a convoluted arrangement of clouds. I have not seen it before, or since.



FLUORESCENT HUES ASIDE, red attracts our attention like no other color. Scarlet is a very brilliant red with a little yellow in it. Crimson is a dark, slightly cooler red.

The red coat of summer deer is more orange than red. A buck I saw back in August was shedding his summer coat, and his left antler was crimson with blood where the velvet was peeling from the tips of his tines. I'll return here in October, and hopefully recover my crimson arrow from the leaves and find him just beyond.

I find the brilliant red eye of the canvasback set into its chestnut head to be a beautiful combination, and the red eye of the male wood duck is a nice accent on such a colorful bird. The redhead duck is easy to identify with his head that captures sunlight like a copper penny.

The scarlet tanager is well-named, for it truly is scarlet, and the rose-breasted grosbeak is also aptly described with his rose-pink bib. A cardinal calling from a brilliant red staghorn sumac is hardly noticeable, but when America's favorite bird flits across a

snowy clearing in the dead of winter the entire landscape brightens.

Although birds of prey lack bright red markings, their days are tinted with the blood of their prey. The red-tailed hawk's trademark tail is a rusty hue, as is the plumage of the red-phase of the screech owl and reddish shoulder feathers of the red-shouldered hawk. The eyes of some mature forest hawks — the goshawk, Cooper's and sharp-shinned — are often a bright blood red. Last but not least, it is the turkey vulture with his crimson head who closes this passage, and that of other lives.

FOR THOSE WHO relish autumn, the dense green walls of summer foliage can become monotonous. During this past summer's drought, the greens in my locale were faded and burnished by successive heat waves and prolonged drought. I found some respite, though, in a canoe trip through the Allegheny Islands Wilderness with several friends. Ben Moyer and I set out in his canoe, deciding to seek out the shallower routes around the islands for some wildlife watching.

If there's a color that most artists struggle with, it's green. Many believe that green is simply green, but if one really studies the many variations of greens in nature, we realize that this hue commands a broad space in nature's palette.

Here on this gentle green river, surrounded by steep, forested hills, was every green imaginable. Muskrats poked their heads up only yards away through the languid, olive-green water of a backstretch. Great blue herons paused motionless in emerald pools, while wood ducks burst out of grassy cutbanks near shore. A single cardinal flower burned like a red torch from a bank of blue-green weeds. Farther down, backlit by the sun, cooling silvery raindrops slanted like lines quickly etched against the dark green backdrop of hills.

When describing this verdant river in summer, I must borrow a line from *Green Fire*, by Scottish poet and nature essayist Fiona Macleod, "Everywhere the green rhythm ran . . ."



AS LIGHT AND COLOR is reflected throughout a landscape, accomplished painters also integrate certain colors throughout a painting. Select colors are skillfully woven in different passages, the eye connects these hues, and the painting gains unity. I try to do this when I'm writing, too. In the fictional piece, "New Blood," (October 2000 *Game News*) the color red is suggested in the title, then is woven throughout the story: red apples, red shotshells, red leaves, an old hunter with a red moustache. Red cues various twists, but also serves as an underpainting upon which the characters and action are rendered.

In nature's palette, blue, and to a lesser degree, violet, often serve as unifying hues to the warmer colors that dominate our daylight world. The trunk of a tree is bathed in warm sunlight on one side, the opposite side catches blue reflected light. Look at the dark, liquid eye of a deer. Reflected on it are both a warm, bright highlight and a blue reflection.

There are dozens of blue butterflies, birds and wildflowers, but other blues come to mind. Whenever I climb a mountain on a clear day, I always stop to admire the bril-

liance of the blue sky just over the ridge. I find the long, serene blue shadows of late afternoon in any season to be a wonderful, relaxing tonic from a busy day. For many Pennsylvanians, the gentle blue-violet of our treasured hills is a color that transcends mere delight: It is a hue that washes through the topography of the heart.

ONCE, THIRTY YEARS ago at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, I studied an abstract painting by Ad Reinhardt (American, 1913-1967). From a distance, the painting appeared to be a large black square, but on closer investigation it was comprised of smaller, alternating blue-black squares, each painted a slightly different shade than

the square next to it. It reminded me of the nuances of black in the coat of a black bear. I thought of how the bear is a true citizen of night, an anonymous and amorphous black form moving through black shadows that are only slightly different than the bear itself, like the alternating squares in Reinhardt's painting.

I had no inclination to do a painting of a black bear at night, (although this could have been quite easy) but instead I came up with the idea for "Ursa Minor" (August 1999 *Game News*), and "Allegheny Elegy" (August 2000) two stories about black bears. Black is not only a stage setting for the storyline, but in effect, has a character presence. To enhance this concept, other

elements in the stories are also black; a black-phase rattler, vultures, blackberries, the night sky, shadows, crows, turkeys, a black locomotive. The bear is born in a black void and ultimately returns to it.

LOOK MORE CLOSELY at those colors we often take for granted. Note that the blue jay is not all blue, but that his back is a pale violet. Know too, that its blue color is an illusion of reflected light, as the jay has no blue pigment in his plumage. What color filters moonlight this night? Yellow, pink, gold? Reveal the orange eye patch of a cock grouse and see the flame that burns so brightly below his somber plumage. Note the range of colors even on an old log: silver moss with its delicate bright red spore cases, the punky yellow heartwood incised by woodpeckers, the chocolate lenzites fungus that lives on it still. When rabbit hunting, I always marvel at the pale lavender arcs of blackberry canes in autumn against the shadowy undergrowth, the same hue as on the back of the jay or in the fleshy caruncles of the hen turkey.

Recently, after a lengthy study, scientists officially announced that the color of the universe is beige, which is sort of an ivory or bone-white color. I like to think of it as the color of deer antlers, the focal point of my universe come colorful October.



FIELD NOTES



Nick Rosato

Dangerous on Both Fronts

BEDFORD — Food & Cover crew members Harvey Fouse, Brad King, Tim Gensimore and I helped biologist John Dunn and his crew capture and band Canada geese. I had done this before, so I knew that geese occasionally bite, but my Food & Cover Crew members didn't. It didn't take long for them to learn, however, especially after Tim had red bite marks up and down his arms and . . . well, you know where when he turned around.

— WCO JIM TROMBETTO, NEW ENTERPRISE

Playing With Fire

TIOGA — The summer before last I had two osprey pairs nest on electric poles in my district, and both successfully fledged their offspring before electrical fires and wind destroyed the nests. Last spring, with the help of the Army Corps of Engineers, concerned citizens, property owners and PennElec and Tri-County Electric companies, two new nesting structures were erected and then used by the ospreys. Thanks to this cooperation, maybe more ospreys will be seen and fewer power-outages will occur in the future.

— WCO ROBERT F. MINNICH, MANSFIELD

Grateful

Thanks to Ernie Krammer and the United Bowhunters we were able to complete a 2-acre border cut, two acres of timber stand improvements, and plant more than 400 conifer trees.

— LMO MATTHEW D. BELDING, PITMAN

Careful What You Wish For

CENTRE — Ruth Clouser jokingly told some youngsters who were camping on her parent's property to watch out for bears. As she turned to leave the wide-eyed youngsters, she noticed a real bear. I'm just glad she didn't say to watch out for bigfoot.

— WCO TERRY D. WILLS, MADISONBURG

Responsible Use

HUNTINGDON — Now that fall is here more spotlights will be flashing across night skies and fields, as spotlighters attempt to get a look at that big buck they had been hearing about. Remember, it's illegal to shine a light on buildings or domestic animals, after 11 p.m., with a firearm or bow in the vehicle, and at any time during the regular firearm deer season. Every year I receive more comments from landowners about how they'd like to see spotlighting outlawed altogether.

— WCO ROBERT A. EINODSHOFER, HUNTINGDON

Hostile Operation

CLINTON — Last summer I had to remove a raccoon and three of her young from the inside of a M-60 tank. I had a tough time maneuvering with my snare pole in the cramped quarters, and I can really sympathize with the four soldiers that occupy a tank. Two of the raccoons sought refuge in the ammo tubes, and after I safely removed them I had to chuckle thinking about the critters flying through the air after being shot out of the gun.

— WCO KEN PACKARD, JERSEY SHORE

Just Passin' Through

FRANKLIN — Chambersburg resident Leon Lehman told me about a hen mallard that nested in the inner courtyard of a local nursing home. After the 16 ducklings hatched, the mother needed to get them to a stream, so the nursing home attendants opened one of the doors and watched as she led her brood down the hall, out the door and to the stream. The residents got a kick out of watching the parade.

— WCO BARRY A. LEONARD, CHAMBERSBURG

Thanks, Red

BLAIR — I was having trouble locating a roadkilled deer, but on my fourth pass on the stretch of road where the deer was supposed to be, I noticed a red fox that had climbed to the berm of the road from a depression on the shoulder. After spotting me the fox ducked back down into the depression, and when I looked over I spotted my RKD. I guess you could say I was "Working Together 'With' Wildlife."

— WCO STEVE HANCZAR, TYRONE

Calculations

SULLIVAN — Fifty pounds of cracked corn used to bait turkeys — \$12. Fine for hunting over bait — \$200. Court costs — \$36. The look on a violator's face when a WCO appears unexpectedly at the bait site — priceless.

— WCO WILLIAM M. WILLIAMS, MUNCY VALLEY

Good Sign

Most of the bucks I have been seeing here in Forest and Warren counties have met the three points on one side antler restrictions, and several have exceeded it by a point or two.

— LMO GEORGE J. MILLER, MARIENVILLE

Appreciated

MONROE — I didn't get her name, but I'd like to thank the woman who cleaned up the parking lot on SGL 186 in Jackson Township. The township road crew who picked up the bags of garbage deserve a lot of credit, too.

— WCO MARK S. RUTKOWSKI, SWIFTWATER

Not Over the Hill Yet

I was helping WCO Dan Figured interview an uncooperative suspect involved in an alleged violation, but eventually the young man decided he had had enough, because he blurted out, "Can I talk to just one of you?" Dan and I obliged, and then the suspect looked at me and said, "Nothing personal, but you're older and more experienced, so I would rather talk to the young guy." Dan got what he needed, and I got what I didn't need — someone telling me I'm old.

— WES JOSEPH WENZEL, NORTHEAST REGION OFFICE, DALLAS



Mud Wrestling

CAMERON — Four deer fell into the shallow spillway at East Branch Lake, and despite the 40-foot fall none of the deer were injured. We were able to catch two of the deer immediately with a throw net, but an adult buck and a doe remained trapped. We quickly devised a plan to crawl down into the spillway and drive the deer to the lowest point, where we lowered a foam ramp so the deer could run out. The doe got out right away, but the buck refused to use the ramp. Deputy Dave Stubber said he thought he could tackle the exhausted buck, and he promptly made a better running tackle than I've ever seen on a football field. Despite being covered in mud we were able to get the buck — and Deputy Stubber — out of the spillway in one piece.

— WCO CLINT J. DENIKER, EMPORIUM

Do Your Homework

PERRY — The summer's drought and oppressive heat seemed to have reduced the amount of mast available here this fall. Wildlife biologists can rely on experience and computers to forecast game populations, but the weather is out of their control.

— WCO JIM BROWN, LOYSVILLE



Resourceful

My young Lab recently injured her leg, and as part of her rehabilitation the vet said it would help if she lost about 10 pounds. We cut back her food, but on the next visit to the vet she had gained weight. The only thing I could attribute the weight gain to was that she loved to eat the cicadas that emerged this summer. Wildlife that eat cicadas should have put on weight for the winter as well.

— LMO DALE E. HOCKENBERRY, EAST BUTLER

New and Improved

FRANKLIN — I came upon a fellow in the Michaux State Forest who was sitting in the bed of his pickup reading the new digest. He said he was getting familiar with the new antler restrictions, and enjoying the articles in the Hunting Annual section. The new digest not only answers the who, what, when, where, why and how aspects about hunting, but it also contains interesting reading about Pennsylvania's wildlife.

— WCO KEVIN L. MOUNTZ, ST. THOMAS

Adding Insult to Injury

FOREST — I was live trapping and relocating nuisance beavers from Buzzard Swamp when I noticed that two of my traps were not only empty, but that the beavers had incorporated them into their dam structure — and they didn't even set them off.

— WCO MARIO L. PICCIRILLI, SIGEL

Grateful

SOMERSET — I would like to thank all the volunteers, Rich Stoner and Bob Chuck, especially, who assisted in the planning, organizing and running of the Somerset County Youth Field Day held at Maple Leaf Rod & Gun Club outside of Meyersdale. The smiles on the kids' faces made it all worthwhile.

— WCO BRIAN E. WITHERITE, MEYERSDALE

Gimmick?

POTTER — I've always wondered if those deer whistles that people put on vehicle bumpers to warn deer really work until I picked up a roadkill and noticed a broken whistle two inches from its head.

— WCO MARK S. FAIR, COUDERSPORT

A Real Problem

VENANGO — We responded to a call about a deer that had been run over by an ATV on one of our Farm-Game cooperator's property. Although we were unable to find out who killed the deer, our increased patrols resulted in several arrests for riding ATVs on land without permission. It always amazes me how some people ride on another's property without even knowing who owns it. When cited, they often ask, "Where are we supposed to ride?" They say they pay thousands of dollars for a machine and should be allowed to ride wherever they want. They never consider the damage they do to property and wildlife habitat. We owe it to our public access program cooperators to protect their land from damage done by inconsiderate people who ruin things for sportsmen and other ethical outdoor enthusiasts.

— WCO LEONARD C. HRIBAR, OIL CITY

Time Warp

MONROE — I&E Supervisor Tim Conway and I were patrolling SGL 127 on ATVs, and at one point I looked at Tim, wearing his bright yellow gloves and sunglasses, and couldn't help but think about that "CHiPS" TV show from the '80s.

— WCO PETE SUSSENBACH, BLAKESLEE

Priorities

GREENE — Monthly reports are always challenging for me, but one beautiful spring morning they were extra difficult. I had the windows open in my office, and just outside a gobbler and a ringneck rooster were noisily "shouting" at each other, distracting me and causing me to make mistakes. Realizing that the next noisy shouting I would hear would come from the region office if I didn't finish helped me concentrate on my paperwork.

— WCO RODNEY BURNS, WAYNESBURG



Tucked In

NORTHUMBERLAND — I received a phone call from a woman who had hit a deer with her car. She didn't want the deer, but she did want it to go to a needy family. When I met her, she told me the deer was in the back seat of her car, but when I looked I couldn't see it. When I asked her where it was, she said it was in the sleeping bag. Apparently, two helpful, but slightly intoxicated, men told her that wrapping the deer would preserve it.

— DEPUTY BARRY W. COOPER, ELYSBURG



Zapped the Sap

BEAVER — When Deputy Mike Yeck called me to help capture a sick skunk I was thrilled, because it would give me a chance to try out a technique with tranquilizers I had learned at the training school. Mike was a little skeptical as I prepared the drug and slowly eased my jab stick towards the skunk, which was under a pine tree. Mike anxiously asked if I got it and I replied, "Yeah, the tree should be asleep in a few minutes."

— WCO TRAVIS J. ANDERSON, ALIQUIPPA

Useful Tip

LUZERNE — Since January 1, 27 bears have been killed on roads here, and nuisance bear calls have never been higher. Bear hunters should have a good season here this year, particularly those who have scouted the blueberry and rhododendron swamps.

— WCO THOMAS D. SWIECH, MOUNTAINTOP

Quite a Day

PERRY — Ed Fulton, Randy Campbell and Randy's daughter Sarah were hunting groundhogs in July when they noticed several deer nervously emerge from a patch of woods, and moments later a coyote popped out. Ed shot the first eastern coyote he had ever seen — a 36-pound male, and 14-year-old Sarah said it was the best time she ever had.

— WCO STEVE HOWER, ICKESBURG

Too Hard to Swallow

BRADFORD — Three years before I retired as a WCO I lost my wallet, which contained my badge, in the lake at Mt. Pisgah State Park. While I was concerned about the money and credit cards, I was heartbroken about losing my original badge issued upon graduation from the Ross Leffler Training School many years before. My optimistic wife Mary Alice kept telling me that someday I would get it back, but I never believed her. But this year, the day before Father's Day, after being away for several days, my wife handed me my wallet, which still contained the badge. It seems a fisherman had reeled in the wallet. Now, some in the Game Commission may feel this is a fish tale, but when I tell them I can't hand in my badge because I lost it again, well, that'll be the real fish story.

— DEPUTY WILLIAM A. BOWER, TROY

Big Hit

BERKS — For my daughter Rebecca's birthday she invited several friends over for a party. The highlight for the kids was to have their picture taken with the deer in the backyard — my robotic deer decoy for catching roadhunters.

— WCO CHUCK LINCOLN, LEESPORT

Way To Go!

BUCKS — I would like to congratulate the Youth Hunter Education Challenge Team from Branch Valley for placing first in the competition at the Scotia Range. The youngsters earned the opportunity to compete at the international shoot in Tioga County.

— WCO JOHN PAPSON, TRUMBAURSVILLE

That's a New One

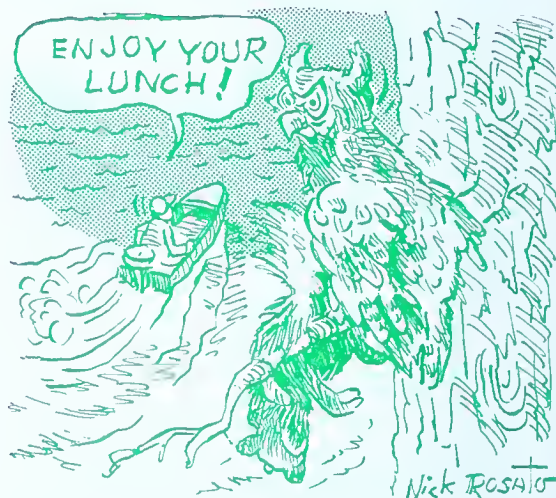
LANCASTER — I stopped two individuals on a game lands who had tossed some empty cans out of their vehicle. When asked why they had littered, they said they routinely cleaned the area each week and were just leaving the cans for their next pick up day.

— WCO JONATHAN S. ZUCK, MANHEIM

"Duck" Tape

NORTHAMPTON — After responding to a call about some ducklings trapped in a storm drain, Deputy Lou Rabenold and I witnessed Terry Minnich of Walnutport remove the 15 ducklings from the drain with a piece of duct tape attached to a stick. I now carry a roll wherever I go.

— WCO BRADLEY D. KREIDER, CHERRYVILLE



Tastes Better Than it Smells

FULTON — Neil Rotz was fishing on Raystown Lake when he noticed a large bird fly up into a tree with what looked like a shredded feed sack tangled in its talons. When he moved the boat in for a closer look, however, he saw that it was a great horned owl with a mature skunk. Neil didn't try to get any closer — he figured between the odor and the size of the owl's talons that he was close enough.

— DEPUTY BERLEY SOUDERS,
McCONNELLSBURG

Age-Old Lesson

YORK — I've heard several hunters grouching about the fact that with the new antler restrictions they're going to have to take extra time to be certain the deer they are shooting is legal. These individuals seem to have forgotten the basic principle that we teach students in the HTE courses: Be absolutely sure of your target and what is beyond.

— WCO GUY HANSEN, RED LION

Waterfowl/migratory game bird seasons

DOVE HUNTERS will once again have the opportunity to participate in a triple-split season. During the first season (Sept. 2-Oct. 5), hunting will start at noon and continue through sunset daily. The second and third splits will be Nov. 2-30, and Dec. 26-Jan. 1, with hunting hours a half-hour before sunrise until sunset. In all three seasons the daily bag limit will be 12 and the possession limit after opening day is 24.

Pennsylvania's woodcock season will open Saturday, Oct. 19, and continue through Saturday, Nov. 16. The daily limit of three birds and six in possession after opening day remains unchanged for the 2002 season.

Virginia and sora rails and moorhen hunting will run from Sept. 2 to Nov. 9. A season for common snipe will run from Oct. 19 to Nov. 23. Daily and possession bag limits for these species are listed on page 44.

Migratory game bird hunters, including those afield for doves and woodcock, are required to obtain and carry a migratory game bird license, also referred to as a HIP permit, (\$3 for residents, \$6 for nonresidents), as well as a general hunting or lifetime license. All waterfowl hunters age 16 and over must possess a federal migratory game bird stamp, commonly referred to as a "Duck Stamp," signed in ink across its face.

All migratory game bird hunters in the United States are required to com-

plete a Harvest Information Program survey when they purchase a state migratory game bird license. The survey information is then forwarded to the USFWS.

John Dunn, Game Commission waterfowl biologist, said Canada goose hunters should pay special attention to new harvest zone boundaries, especially the creation of a new "Resident Population Zone" throughout much of central and western Pennsylvania. The new boundaries, while unfortunately adding complexity to goose hunting regulations, allow for increased hunting opportunity, Dunn noted.

"This year, hunters in the new Resident Population Zone will see a 70-day season and 5-bird daily limit, up from a 30-day season and a 2-bird daily limit," Dunn said. "The Atlantic Population Zone, which comprises much of eastern Pennsylvania, has an expanded 45-day season with a 2-bird daily limit."

Resident Canada geese breed locally throughout the Atlantic Flyway extending into southern Ontario and Quebec. They are largely non-migratory, shifting only slightly in winter depending upon the severity of weather. Surveys of nesting Canada geese have been conducted since 1989 in Atlantic Flyway states from Virginia to Maine, including Pennsylvania. The total spring population estimate was 965,900, which is similar to the 2001 population estimate.

2002-03 Migratory Game Bird Hunting Seasons

Species	Open	Close	Daily	Possession
Mourning Doves	Sept. 2	Oct. 5	12	24
	Nov. 2	Nov. 30		
	Dec. 26	Jan. 1		
Woodcock	Oct. 19	Nov. 16	3	6
Virginia, Sora Rails	Sept. 2	Nov. 9	25	25
Moorhens	Sept. 2	Nov. 9	15	30
Common (Wilson's) Snipe	Oct. 19	Nov. 23	8	16

The 2002 Pennsylvania Canada goose population estimate of 234,700 is similar to the 10-year average of 193,300, and the 2001 estimate of 246,800.

The Southern James Bay Population of Canada geese, which is the predominant migratory goose population in northwest Pennsylvania, nests on Akimiski Island of the Northwest Territories and in the James Bay lowlands of Ontario. There were 76,300 Canada geese counted on aerial surveys this spring, which is 26 percent lower than in 2001, and the fall flight is expected to be lower than last year. However, hunting regulations for this 3-county area — all of Erie and Mercer counties and a majority of Crawford County — will be similar to previous years.

Dunn pointed out that the 2002-03 duck seasons include a closed season for canvasbacks, due to a low breeding population and poor produc-

tion this year. Also, the season for pintails has been reduced to 30 days with a 1-bird daily limit since because this year this species experienced a dramatic decline to record low numbers and little production is expected.

"A continental resource, canvasbacks are extremely sensitive to changes in breeding habitat conditions," Dunn said. "Season closures have been used in the past because of their relatively low abundance. But, rather than impose blanket reductions for all duck species, the USFWS chose to restrict hunting for those species whose populations remain a concern."

Dunn noted the Atlantic brant hunting season has been increased to 60 days with a 3-bird daily limit.

"By answering the questions on the survey card, hunters will improve survey efficiency and the quality of information used to track the harvest of migratory birds for management purposes," Dunn said.

CONTACTING THE REGION OFFICES

Northwest — 1-877-877-0299

Southwest — 1-877-877-7137

Northcentral — 1-877-877-7674

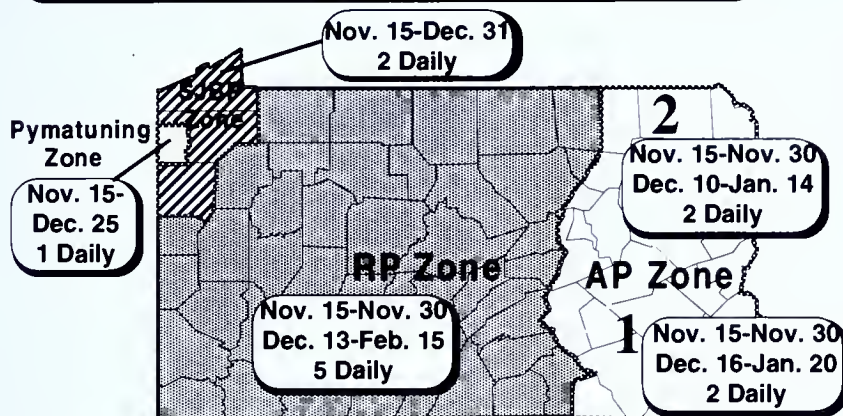
Southcentral — 1-877-877-9107

Northeast — 1-877-877-9357

Southeast — 1-877-877-9470

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.

Regular Canada Goose Hunting Season



All of Pennsylvania will have a regular Canada goose season. However, seasons and bag limits will vary by area as follows:

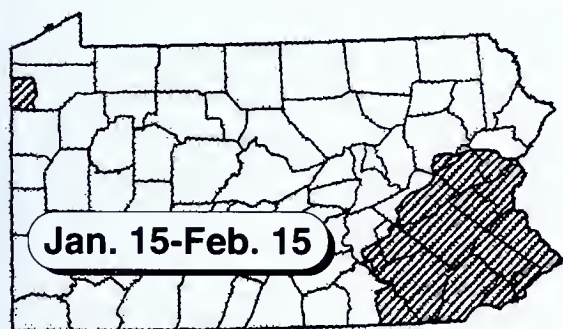
RP Zone: All of Pennsylvania except for Crawford, Erie, and Mercer counties and the area east of I-83 from the Maryland state line to the intersection of US Route 30 to the intersection of SR 441 to intersection of I-283, east of I-283 to I-83, east of I-83 to intersection of I-81, east of I-81 to the intersection of US Route 322, east of US Route 322 to intersection of SR 147, east of SR 147 to intersection of I-180, east of I-180 to intersection of US Route 220, east of US Route 220 to the New York state line. Season: Nov. 15 - Nov. 30 & Dec. 13 - Feb. 15 with a 5 daily limit, 10 in possession.

SJB Zone: Erie, Mercer and Crawford Counties except for the Pymatuning Zone. Season: Nov. 15 - Dec. 31 with a 2 daily limit, 4 in possession.

Pymatuning Zone: The area south of SR 198 from the Ohio state line to intersection of SR 18 to intersection of US Route 322/SR 18, to intersection of SR 3013, south to the Crawford/Mercer County line. Season: Nov. 15 - Dec. 25 with a 1 daily limit, 2 in possession.

AP Zone: (1) The area east of I-83 from the Maryland state line to the intersection of US Route 30 to the intersection of SR 441 to intersection of I-283, east of I-283 to I-83, east of I-83 to intersection of I-81, east of I-81 to the intersection of US Route 322, east of US Route 322 to intersection of SR 147, east of SR 147 to intersection of I-180, east of I-180 to intersection of US Route 220, east of US Route 220 to the New York state line. Season: Nov. 15 - Nov. 30 & Dec. 10 - Jan. 14, with a 2 daily limit, 4 in possession. **Except:** (2) The area east of US Route 220 from the New York state line, east of US Route 220 to intersection of I-180, east of I-180 to intersection of SR 147, east of SR 147 to intersection of US Route 322, east of US Route 322 to intersection of I-81, north of I-81 to intersection of I-80, and north of I-80 to the New Jersey state line. Season: Nov. 15 - Nov. 30 & Dec. 16 - Jan. 20, with a 2 daily limit, 4 in possession.

Late Canada Goose Hunting (Statewide)

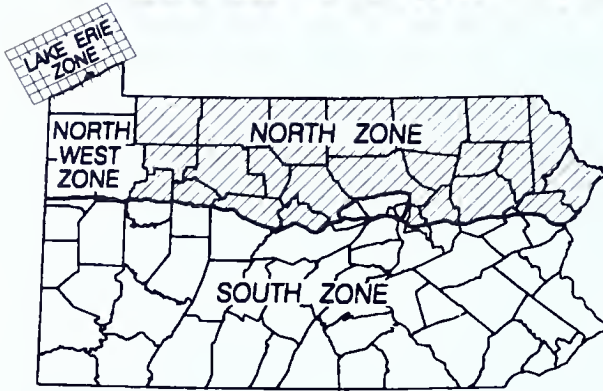


5 geese daily, 10 in possession

Exceptions: (1) Closed in Crawford County in the area south of SR 198 from the Ohio line to intersection of SR 18 to intersection of US Rt. 322/SR18, to intersection of SR 3013, south to the Crawford/Mercer line.

(2) Closed in the area east of I-83 from Maryland line to intersection of US Rt. 30, to intersection of SR 441, to intersection of I-283, east of I-283 to I-83, east of I-83 to intersection of I-81, east of I-81 to intersection of I-80, and south of I-80 to New Jersey line.

Duck Seasons - Ducks, sea ducks, coots and mergansers



Lake Erie Zone — Canvasbacks: closed; Ducks, coots and mergansers: Oct. 28 - Nov. 16 & Nov. 25 - Dec. 7; Pintails: Oct. 28 - Nov. 16 & Nov. 25 - Dec. 7

North Zone — Canvasbacks: closed; Ducks, coots and mergansers: Oct. 5 - 19 & Nov. 12 - 30; Pintails: Oct. 5 - 19 & Nov. 12 - 30

Northwest Zone — Canvasbacks: closed; Ducks, coots and mergansers: Oct. 15 - 19 & Nov. 9 - Jan. 2; Pintails: Oct. 5 - 12 & Nov. 9 - 28

South Zone — Canvasbacks: closed; Ducks, coots and mergansers: Oct. 5 - 12 & Nov. 15 - Jan. 15

Atlantic brant (All Zones): Oct. 5 - Dec. 13

Snow geese (All Zones): Nov. 7 - Mar. 10

Harlequin ducks, canvasbacks, swans and white-fronted geese: No open season.

All ducks: 6 daily; daily limit may not include more than 4 mallards including 2 hens, 1 black duck, 1 pintail, 1 mottled duck, 1 fulvous tree duck, 2 wood ducks, 2 redheads, 4 scoters and 3 scaup.

Mergansers: 5 daily; not more than 1 hooded merganser daily.

Coots: 15 daily.

Atlantic brant: 3 daily.

Snow geese: 15 daily.

Possession limit is twice the daily limit, except snow geese, which is unlimited.

Pymatuning Wildlife Management Area: shooting days are Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, one-half hour before sunrise to 12:30 p.m. Ducks: Oct. 5 - 19 and Nov. 9 - Dec. 21. Geese: Nov. 15 - Dec. 21.

Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area: Controlled shooting sections will be open Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. Shooting hours are one-half hour before sunrise to 1:30 p.m. Geese and ducks: Nov. 16, 18, 19, 21, 23, 25, 26, 28 & 30; Dec. 16, 17, 19, 21, 23, 24, 26, 28, 30 & 31; Jan. 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 13 & 14; and Geese only: Jan. 16, 18 & 20.

For the record, an early Canada goose season was held statewide, Sept. 2 - 25. A Youth Waterfowl Hunting Day was held Sept. 21.

Caution about eating mergansers

BASED on studies conducted the past two decades in Pennsylvania and New York, mergansers, especially common and red-breasted, in the Lake Erie region have been found with varying levels of contaminants, including PCBs.

For this reason, the Game Commis-

sion cautions people from consuming any mergansers. Other waterfowl should be skinned and the fat removed before cooking. Stuffing should be discarded after cooking and should not be consumed. People should not eat more than two meals of waterfowl per month.

Summary of Federal Regulations

Notice: The material below is only a summary. Each hunter should also consult the actual Federal Regulations which may be found in Title 50, *Code of Federal Regulations*, Part 20. In addition to State regulations, the following Federal rules also apply to the taking, possession, shipping, transporting and storing of migratory game birds.

Restriction. No person shall take migratory game birds:

- With a trap, snare, net, crossbow, rifle, pistol, revolver, swivel gun, shotgun larger than 10-gauge, punt gun, battery gun, machine gun, fishhook, poison, drug, explosive or stupefying substance.
- With a shotgun capable of holding more than three shells, unless it is plugged with a one piece filler which is incapable of removal without disassembling the gun.
- From a sink box (a low floating device, having a depression affording the hunter a means of concealment beneath the surface of the water).
- From or with the aid or use of a car or other motor-driven land conveyance, or any aircraft.
- From or by means of any motor boat or sail boat unless the motor has been completely shut off and/or the sail furled, and its progress therefrom has ceased.
- By the use or aid of live decoys. All live, tame or captive ducks and geese shall be removed for a period of 10 consecutive days prior to hunting, and confined within an enclosure which substantially reduces the audibility of their calls and totally conceals such tame birds from the sight of migratory waterfowl.
- Using records or tapes of migratory bird calls or sounds, or electrically amplified imitations of bird calls.
- By driving, rallying or chasing birds with any motorized conveyance or any sail boat to put them in the range of hunters.
- By the aid of baiting (placing feed such as corn, wheat, salt or other feed to constitute a lure or enticement), or on or over any baited area. Hunters should be aware that a baited area is considered to be baited for 10 days after the removal of the bait.

Closed Season. No person shall take migratory game birds during the closed season.

Waterfowl hunting is not permitted on Sundays.

Shooting or Falconry Hours. No person shall take migratory game birds except during the hours open to shooting and falconry as prescribed.

Daily Bag Limit. No person shall take in any one day more than one daily bag limit.

Field Possession Limit. No person shall possess more than one daily bag limit while in the field or while returning from the field to one's car, hunting camp, home, etc.

Wanton Waste. All migratory game birds killed or crippled shall be retrieved, if possible, and retained in the custody of the hunter in the field.

Tagging. No person shall give, put or leave any migratory game birds at any place or in the custody of another person unless the birds are tagged by the hunter with the following information: the hunter's signature and address; the total number of birds involved, by species; and the dates such birds were killed. No person or business shall receive or have in custody any migratory game birds belonging to another person unless such birds are tagged.

Possession of Live Birds. Wounded birds reduced to possession shall be immediately killed and included in the daily bag limit.

Dressing. No person shall completely field dress any migratory game bird (except doves) and then transport the birds from the field. The head or one fully feathered wing must remain attached to all such birds while being transported from the field to one's home or to a migratory bird preservation facility.

Nontoxic Shot, Shot Size. NONTOTOXIC SHOT must be used while hunting ducks, geese and/or coots in Pennsylvania; the possession of lead shot while hunting ducks, geese and/or coots is unlawful. Shot for waterfowl hunting may not be larger than T size. Nontoxic shot types approved by the USFWS are: steel shot; steel shot with coating (1% of either copper, nickel, zinc chromate, or zinc chloride), bismuth-tin, tungsten-iron, tungsten-polymer and tungsten-matrix.

Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp. The law requires that each waterfowl hunter 16 years of age and older must carry on his person a valid Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, or duck stamp, signed in ink across its face.

For additional information on federal regulations, contact Senior Resident Agent, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Elizabeth, NJ 07201; 1-973-645-5910.

Hunters encouraged to report banded birds

HUNTERS are encouraged to call 1-800-327-BAND (2263), to report banded ducks and geese they harvest. Callers will be asked, in addition to band numbers, where, when and what species were killed. Bands can also be reported on the web at www.pwrc.usgs.gov. Select "Bird Banding Lab."

Additionally, hunters who harvest geese in the vicinity of Pymatuning are encouraged to look for small metal-tags placed in the web-portion of the goose's feet. Web-tags were placed on more than 500 newly hatched goslings

in April and May as part of a study to examine gosling production. If a goose has a web-tag, hunters are asked to report the tag number to the Game Commission's Northwest Region Office at 1-877-877-0299 (toll-free). Hunters should not call the Northwest Region to report a leg-band. An operator will ask where and when the hunter harvested the goose and for the web-tag number.

Hunters who call can leave their name and phone number to receive information on where and when the gosling was tagged.

Electronic decoys prohibited

THE USE of electronic or electrically powered decoys is illegal for waterfowling in Pennsylvania. Under current regulations, the use of any

electronic contrivance or device, including battery-powered decoys, that does not have specific approval by the Board is prohibited.

Former Game Commissioners die

DAVID DRAKULA, 59, passed away on August 25, 2002, after a lengthy illness. He served on the Game Commission Board from March 1976-January 1982. A resident of Emporium since 1967, he was a teacher with the Cameron County School District for 35 years before his retirement.

TAYLOR A. (TED) DOEBLER, JR., 77, passed away on August 10, 2002. Mr. Doeblér, a well-known farmer, agribusinessman and sports-

man, was born in Grove City in 1925 and served in Europe during World War II.

He was appointed to several Pennsylvania commissions by Governor Thornburg, including the Game Commission, where he served from May 1982 through November 1988. He was president of the Board of Commissioners during the construction of the current Game Commission headquarters building in Harrisburg.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.



Off the Wire

by Bob D'Angelo

Chronic Wasting Disease

The U.S. Congress is attempting to consolidate several bills that were introduced to advance a multi-agency plan to assist states, federal agencies and tribes in managing the growing threat of chronic wasting disease. The Safari Club International Foundation continues to meet with other conservation organizations to explore how these nonprofit agencies can effectively assist the government in eradicating this disease. Ending CWD will require substantial investments in research, animal testing, and wildlife management programs to curtail infection of healthy deer and elk populations. SCI encourages sportsmen to keep expressing strong support for increased federal and state funding of CWD programs.

Australia

An exploding kangaroo population on an army base in the southern part of the country prompted officials to recruit shooters to kill up to 15,000 of the animals to keep them from starving to death. The kangaroo population increased from 45,000 in 1999 to more than 80,000, and the management program will cost \$385,000. Kangaroo meat is exported for pet food.

Wyoming

Approximately 330 elk are killed in the state each year by wolves. For comparison, hunters took 22,772 in 2001.

Pennsylvania

In 2000, one in seven acres of land was publicly owned. The Keystone State ranks 17th in the nation in publicly owned acres. Alaska, California and Arizona have the most public land, while Kansas, Delaware and Rhode Island have the least.

Wisconsin

Wildlife officials are recruiting landowners in three counties to kill 14,000 to 15,000 white-tailed deer that may have been exposed to chronic wasting disease. The disease, which causes animals to grow thin as it destroys their brains, hadn't been seen in deer east of the Mississippi River until it appeared in three shot in Wisconsin last fall. A special hunt in April found 11 more infected deer out of 500 killed, and six of 262 deer taken during June tested positive for CWD. To prevent the disease from spreading, landowners and sharpshooters will be used to kill every deer in a 285-square-mile area of southern Wisconsin. Chronic wasting disease also has been found in wild or captive elk and deer in Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, Minnesota, Montana, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Wyoming, Saskatchewan and Alberta. There is currently no evidence that chronic wasting disease can spread to humans.

North Dakota

Counts taken on 196 miles of survey routes last spring showed a 56-percent decrease in the number of drumming ruffed grouse males from 2001.

Florida

The number of endangered panthers living in southwest Florida is estimated at between 70 and 100 — a nice increase from the 50 estimated 10 years ago.

Another View

By Linda Steiner

Our time is not only passing quickly, it's limited. We know that, but in a cloudy kind of way, until someone we care about reaches the end of his or her time here with us.

No Time to Waste

SOMEWHERE about age 16 I fell behind. I just couldn't seem to get everything done that I wanted to do. What I didn't know at the time was that acquiring the feeling of never getting around to all I intended to accomplish was, as much as anything, a rite of passage to adulthood. The reason that the "Sweet 16" birthday is significant is not only about getting a driver's permit or being "old enough to be kissed." The welcome to becoming a grown-up is also the entrée into the mindset that time is a-wasting.

Our time is not only passing quickly, it's limited. We know that, but in a cloudy kind of way, until someone we care about reaches the end of his or her time here with us. That makes the concept that our own time is not unlimited — a true breath-in-your-face fact. Time keeps flashing past us — that can't be avoided — to the long or short of what we will have of life. Whether that time spent was also wasted is the part we can control.

Recently my father passed away, at age 75, after several years of deteriorating health. When the family looked back on happier times, we realized that Dad had enjoyed 16 years of retirement. He retired from the U.S. Postal Service at age 58, considered, then especially, an early retirement. At the time, he had looked at the retirement package offered him and



Bob Steiner

LINDA and her dad LEN HAAK take a break while bowhunting. Archery hunting was his favorite, and he spent many enjoyable days at it — time definitely not wasted.

whether that would fund what he and Mom needed until Social Security kicked in at age 62, and he decided to jump.

I remember that I missed his retirement party. By then I lived across two states, from western Pennsylvania to his eastern New Jersey home, a drive worthwhile only with the luxury of days to spend once I arrived. Rather than attend his party, I waited at my home for Mom and Dad to come here. My place in Pennsylvania was their retirement trip, during which Dad spent some

of his trickling time on the streams and in the woods.

Throughout those retirement years, Dad never missed his several annual trips to Pennsylvania. At first, my home area was new to him, as it was to me, because I had recently moved there. New hunting spots to find, explore and build experiences in. Now he could walk from my backyard and go hunting, something he had not been able to do for many years in New Jersey. As a kid, there were rabbits to chase with beagles on a family farm in Paramus, plus days and nights to spend in the woods along the Saddle River, just out his own back door in Ridgewood. Those places are mostly built-up now and the farm had gone under a mall long before his retirement. My Pennsylvania place was like a step back to a younger time for him.

Dad especially enjoyed archery hunting. I suspect that was partly because bow practice was the one kind of shooting he could do in his suburban yard. The neighbors would wander over to watch, rather than call the cops, as they would have had he tried to shoot his guns. Bow season with my brother and friends in New Jersey, and with me and our group in Pennsylvania, became his favorite hunting pastime. More misses than hits, more missed opportunities than venison were the final tally, but oh what a good time in the forests and fields of October.

In those 16 years, Dad got out to Pennsylvania for firearm deer season nearly every year, and he hunted New Jersey's shotgun deer season regularly. When here he borrowed my husband's or my .30-06, a luxury with its accuracy and high-power scope, compared to his slug gun. Dad usually came for the last of buck season, so he could take part in the, back then, antlerless deer season that followed. His trip lasted about a week. Sometimes Dad came for opening day of buck season, but he was the only retired one. Everyone else had to go back to work after a couple of days and there was no one to hunt with, so catch-

ing the end of buck season and all of doe season was the best use of his time.

I was part of Dad's last deer kill. He got the fattest doe in the bunch, he said. My brother and I pushed a thick timber cut, while Dad sat watching a trail in an opening where the heavy cover funneled into a hollow. We heard the shot just before we got to him and were pleased with ourselves. We knew Dad was having trouble getting around, losing strength and stamina, and walking into the woods even a short distance was difficult. My brother and I patted ourselves on the back that we had driven Dad what we knew in our hearts was his last deer. When we saw the size of the doe, we were doubly glad. Then we heard the rest of the story. The deer had come from the opposite direction, across the road. Other hunters had pushed it over to him; my brother and I hadn't moved the doe to him after all.

The next spring, Dad had a heart operation, and he never was as well as before. He did travel out to hunt several years later, on an opening day of deer season, but didn't stay long in the woods; he couldn't take the cold. He hunted one more day, the next fall's turkey season, but the weather turned to icy rain, and he fell ill. He didn't know it then, and I wouldn't have wanted to believe it if I were he, but his hunting days were over.

Dad hadn't wasted the hunting time that was available to him, but we did waste one opportunity. After his heart operation, he didn't have the strength to draw his compound bow. Dad said he would go down to the basement occasionally and try, but he just couldn't pull it back. I don't doubt the doctor had told him not to yank that 50-some pound pull, but he tried anyway. Not being able to draw his bow bothered him greatly.

About then Pennsylvania began its program for hunters who are physically unable to draw a bow to get a permit for a crossbow. I wish I could say that my dad got a crossbow and spent several more fall

bow seasons with me, but he didn't. He didn't know anything about crossbows, and there was no one where he lived to help him learn. If I had lived closer, I would have pursued this with him and helped him get set up to hunt with a crossbow. But it just didn't happen. That is a regret of mine, that we wasted what could have been additional hunting time for him by not getting the permit and the crossbow.

After Dad passed away, I thought about the time outdoors he had captured, and what had slipped away. In total, even without taking up the crossbow, he had more hunting time than many as he got older, because he arranged it that way. I thought of another fellow I know, who has been putting off retiring to his country place in Pennsylvania for years now. "I'll retire there when I'm 70," he would say. He still hasn't retired, he is more than 70, and was recently diagnosed with a terminal illness. He'll never be able to spend the time he had been saving up.

I thought, too, about another, younger friend, whose doctor told him he has severely blocked arteries and may have to undergo a heart operation. The doctor is

trying to reverse the condition with diet and medication first, rather than surgery. The doctor also told him that his days of lifting anything heavy and doing strenuous activity were over, at least until — or if — there's a big improvement in his heart and circulatory situation. That means no deer dragging, no hoisting a climbing stand up a tree, and no more drawing his compound bow. He felt that all his bowhunting time had been used up.

When he told me that, I didn't so much sympathize as get excited for him. There's only one thing to be done. You gotta get a crossbow. You'll get to try a new kind of bowhunting. Actually, the hunt will be the same, the same time of year, same woods, same deer that hear and see you first. The only difference is you won't have to haul back to draw the bow, just raise and aim the sights. The killing distance will be about the same — close. And so what if you can't use a climbing stand? Didn't you ever hear of a ground blind, and besides, you've shot deer with a bow while on the ground before. You've got to get that permit and crossbow and get practicing, I told him. There's no time to waste . . . but then there never is. □

Linda thought about the time outdoors her dad had captured, and what had slipped away. He had more hunting time than many as he got older, because he arranged it that way.

COVER PHOTO BY JOHN PLOWMAN

THE LAST Saturday in October or the first Saturday in November in the Keystone State — the regular small game season opener — once meant loading beagles in the pickup for a morning of chasing bunnies, or busting through a cornfield choked with foxtail, rousting out long-tailed roosters. In recent years, however, more hunters are pursuing turkeys. And why not? Turkeys are everywhere now — 48,000 were taken by hunters during the 2001 fall season — and the chances of busting up a fall flock are good. Remember, it's imperative to wear the required amount of fluorescent orange for the management area you're hunting in; please review your hunting and trapping regulation digest — think safety.

The Naturalist's Eye

By Marcia Bonta

Do trees, shrubs and vines, such as black gum, flowering dogwood, Virginia creeper, poison ivy, sumacs and wild grape, that turn color early in autumn, do so because they are signaling to migrating fruit-eating birds that their fruits are ripe? Some scientists believe so.

The Leaves of Autumn

WEEKS BEFORE the maples and oaks turn color, I've already been satiated by the brilliant hues of the understory trees, shrubs and vines. From the time I spot the first scarlet and purple leaves on black gum trees in late August until the understory leaves fall in mid-October, I'm surrounded by gold, purple, orange, pink,

and every shade in between during my daily walks.

Scientists have known for years that plants turn color by flooding their leaves with an enzyme that breaks down the chlorophyll, which makes leaves green, and carries certain chemicals, such as nitrogen and magnesium, out of the leaves before they drop. This process unveils color-



ful pigments that have been in the leaves throughout the growing season. Carotene pigments make leaves orange and yellow, while the pigment anthocyanin is responsible for red and purple. Whether leaves turn purple or red often depends on the acidity or alkalinity of the tree. For instance, the more acidic red maples turn red and the more alkaline ash trees turn purple.

Although the signal to turn color is related to longer nights and cooler weather that eventually stop the trees' growth system, each species has a different response time. Here on our mountain, black gum, striped maple, witch hazel and black birch turn first, and all the oak species and quaking aspen last. In between is the grand pagentry of red and sugar maples.

For a long time scientists didn't have a clue why leaves turn color. One researcher, James Poling, back in 1971, wrote in *Leaves: Their Amazing Lives and Strange Behavior* that " . . . as far as botanists can determine, the chemical energy that goes into the painting of a leaf is of no benefit at all to the plant . . . "

Since then, several scientists have been looking at the question and coming up with a variety of answers. Botanist Edmund Stiles has been particularly interested in many of the trees, shrubs and vines that turn color early, such as black gum, flowering dogwood, Virginia creeper, spicebush, poison ivy, sumacs, wild grape and sassafras. He believes there must be a good reason these plants give up a month of photosynthesis, and thinks that their leaves, which he calls "foliar fruit flags," are signaling to migrating fruit-eating birds that their fruits are ripe.

Many of these plants, such as spicebush, dogwood, black gum and sassafras, have fruits high in fats that rot quickly if they are not eaten. And because birds are the dispersers of the seeds of these plants, it's important to them that the birds eat their fruits and defecate their seeds while they are still viable.

Furthermore, migrant birds would not

know, as resident birds would, where the fruits are, so the bright leaves, seen against a mostly green landscape, would serve as signals to migrating fruit-eating birds such as robins, cedar waxwings, eastern bluebirds, veeries, brown thrashers, gray catbirds, and wood, hermit, Swainson's and gray-cheeked thrushes.

Most of Stiles's "foliar fruit flag" species also have inconspicuous fruits hidden by leaves. Without the colored leaves, the birds might not look for the fruit. Green vines are particularly difficult to spot as they twine along the ground or up tree trunks, but when they turn color, they are strikingly beautiful and easy to see. Poison ivy has clusters of gray or whitish fruits and compound red leaves. Virginia creeper hides its flat-topped clusters of bluish-black fruits with scarlet leaves, while wild grapevines produce compact clumps of purple grapes beneath golden leaves. Spicebush, too, has gold leaves and contrasting red clusters of fruit that, when crushed, smell like allspice.

Black gum trees sometimes produce small clusters of half-inch long, bluish black fruits beneath their flamboyantly colored leaves. The fruits of sassafras are dark blue and shiny under a veil of yellow and red leaves while the purplish red leaves of flowering dogwood hide showy clusters of red fruit. Staghorn sumac leaves also turn red and have showy upright clusters of fuzzy red fruit.

Stiles studied staghorn sumac in detail to prove his hypothesis, because it is a dioecious species (one that has male and female flowers on separate plants) that forms clones of plants. He hypothesized that nonfruiting male clones would not have many foliar fruit flags because they have no fruit.

On October 3, 1981, he drove three transects — from Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, to Palmerton along Route 209; Palmerton to Easton on routes 248, 512 and U.S. Route 22; and from Easton to Oldbridge, New Jersey, along Route 178,

noting both the fruiting and nonfruiting clones of staghorn sumac. Along all three transects the fruiting female clones had many more colored leaves than the male clones, strengthening his theory.

Stiles offered his explanation for early leaf color in some plants in *The American Naturalist* in 1982. More recently other scientists have been tackling why leaves color in general. Two British scientists think that bright colors signal sap-eating aphids to let the trees alone, because they will get a mouthful of thickening, unpalatable leaves to chew on and encounter heightened chemical defenses. The leaves are producing "a pick on someone else" signal to autumn-flying insects that feed on leaves," researcher Sam Brown claims.

Scientists at the University of Wisconsin have another theory about why leaves turn scarlet and, in addition, why some colors are more vibrant one year than another. They believe that the red pigments (anthocyanins) act as sunscreens by shading sensitive photosynthesis tissue in the autumn while trees reabsorb nutrients from their leaves.

In an anonymously authored paper titled "Fall Color Acts as Sunscreen," which they published in December 2001, they wrote, "the pigments protect leaves' dwindling ability to generate energy. Besides high light levels, plant stressors such as near-freezing temperatures, drought, and low nutrient levels trigger increased pig-

ment levels."

This theory is plausible because autumn color is brightest when the weather is dry and sunny and the nights cold but not freezing. Also, the scientists pointed out that "the outer leaves of trees, such as maples are more colorful than leaves shaded inside the canopy or those with a northern exposure," which further strengthens their hypothesis.

Clearly, scientists are still working on this and other theories to understand why leaves turn color. To those of us afield, what really matters is that the leaves do turn color and that we have a front seat for the almost 2-month light and color extravaganza. The leaves brighten the forest even when it's raining, and for a few days after they drop we have color beneath our feet as well. In early October, I feel as if I am trodding on fields of gold created by black birch, witch hazel and the other yellow leaves that fall then. The red and gold maple leaves form a similar carpet in mid-October. At the end of the month, the wine-red, burnt orange, brown and beige leaves of the oaks, and bright gold leaves of the aspens, are finally blown to the ground. The color quickly fades, though, because even before leaves fall, they have been colonized by saprophytic fungi. These fungi can start the leaves' rotting by breaking down their cellulose and lignin, creating a cloying, sour smell that I detect after



the first late autumn rains. Then their decomposition is taken over by litter fungi, primarily of the Basidiomycetes class of most gilled mushrooms.

“Mushrooms are a symbol of renewal and a symbol of the season. They are the shining fruits of the great autumn leaf harvest,” writes Peter Marchand in his excellent book *Autumn: A Season of Change*. Perhaps not so coincidentally, the variety and colors of fall mushrooms are almost as amazing as those of autumn leaves.

Earthworms, snails, small arthropods, nematodes, slime molds and other decomposer organisms, which can amount to five tons an acre in productive forest soil, join the fungi. In most northern, mixed deciduous forests, it takes approximately 10 years for the total decomposition of leaves to occur, but every year the leaves that fall return a little more than 100 pounds per acre

of nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, calcium and magnesium to the soil, supplying from 75 to 85 percent of the trees’ needs for these elements every year.

No matter what scientists may eventually discover about why leaves turn color — and I suspect there will be many reasons — once leaves fall they are immensely important to the continuing life of the forest. They are also important to streams and rivers, feeding aquatic insects and crustaceans called “shredders,” which, in turn, feed fish.

“Consider,” Henry David Thoreau wrote in his journal in 1853, “what a vast crop is thus annually shed upon the earth. This, more than any mere grain or seed, is the great harvest of the year.” A great harvest that not only brightens our October days, but reminds us that from death comes a renewal of life. □

Fun Games — By Connie Mertz

Straight from the Bowstring

Place the letter of the correct answer in the spaces, and then see what they spell.

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| _____ bow’s handle | H one of bow’s basic designs |
| _____ limbs | E holder for arrows |
| _____ tips | B riser |
| _____ straight limb | U used for hunting big game |
| _____ broadhead arrow | R used for hunting small game |
| _____ fletching | N sometimes made of feathers |
| _____ armguard | T worn to protect forearm |
| _____ quiver | O upper and lower sections of bow |
| _____ blunt arrow | W extreme ends of bow’s limbs |

Person who hunts with bow and arrow _____

answers on p. 63

Deer at Mid-Season

SOME HUNTERS look upon archery season as beginning on one date and ending on another six weeks later. For them, the season is just a string of days when deer can be hunted with a bow and arrow. For me, though, the archery season is much more.

After more than 40 years of bowhunting, I've found that archery season is not one season, as some may think, but rather several distinct seasons, each requiring special knowledge about whitetail behavior and the tactics for hunting them.

The 6-week archery season can loosely be broken down into what I refer to as the early season, when deer are undisturbed by other hunters and still in their late summer habits, the mid-season, when deer behavior is altered by human activity from small game or muzzleloader hunters, and the pre-rut period, when bucks are actively seeking and chasing does.

There are, of course, no specific dates for the beginning or end of each of these phases. Subtle changes in the whitetail's behavior are all that alert an observant hunter to what is happening in the whitetail's world. Of these three phases, I find hunting deer during the mid-season to be the most challenging.

For me, bowhunting begins in September. Not with archery tackle, but with my eyes and feet. I believe scouting for deer in the weeks prior to opening day to be the single most important factor for a successful season. Last year, after several weeks of walking woodlots and farm fields, I was confident the location I finally selected would be productive. To maximize my

bowhunting opportunity, I try to fill my tag during the first two weeks of the season. If I do, I can then hunt a friend's farm in New York, about four miles above the Pennsylvania border. However, despite diligent scouting and preparation on my part, things don't always go as planned.

My portable treestand was set in the boughs of a white pine tree overlooking several apple trees. The trees were just inside a woodlot bordering about five acres of standing corn. Experience had taught me that any deer moving through the area would walk just inside the field edge, providing an easy shot even if they didn't come to the apples.

About 7:30 on opening morning, a shuffling in the leaves alerted me to the presence of a deer. A spike buck casually walked along the field edge where I expected a deer might pass. I quickly dismissed the idea of taking a shot. I had six weeks to hunt, and from my scouting I knew several larger bucks lived in the area.

During the following two weeks I hunted the area every evening and saw deer, but only a doe and her fawns came within shooting range. Despite the scarcity of antlered deer, I wasn't worried. Throughout the summer and early fall, I saw several bucks and knew they had to be around, but after two fruitless weeks, I was beginning to wonder. I had to change my hunting tactics because it was clear I was hunting where the bucks weren't.

During the first two weeks in October, deer are still in their summer habits of feeding and resting, and this predictability is what makes them vulnerable, at least most of the time. During this period, I remain

in my stand until at least 9:30, and I'm back on watch by 4 o'clock in the afternoon. The few hours just after sunrise and just before sunset are the most productive times of the day, because this is when deer are most likely to be moving. In the early part of the season, midday hunting can be a waste of time because deer are apt to be inactive. If undisturbed, deer feed heavily in the evening, rest during the night and browse their way to their bedding areas just after dawn.

During the first two weeks of archery season, I hunt over a concentrated food source. Apple, pear or other wild fruit trees surrounded by thick cover are good locations for seeing deer and possibly getting a shot. However, as good as these locations may be, hunters may sometimes not see deer. Depending on the temperature, moon phase, weather or other natural factors, deer may not feed on soft mast during hunting hours, preferring to browse on the fruit late at night or early in the morning before hunting hours.

The biggest problem when hunting exclusively over soft mast is that its attraction is often short-lived because deer, when they do feed on these foods, quickly consume them. This is often frustrating for the hunter because what was once a most promising spot can suddenly become un-

productive. This is what happened to me last season. For three weeks does and fawns were the only deer I saw feeding on the fruit. By the third week of October I was facing a mid-season slump.

About the middle of October, other highly preferred foods such as cut corn or acorns attract deer and can hold their attention for days at a time. These sources of carbohydrates are more abundant but less concentrated, so deer feed over larger areas and may seemingly vanish from areas where their numbers were previously high. This is why many hunters complain about the lack of deer sightings and go into a period I call the mid-season slump.

The decline in the number of deer seen is often due to factors such as changing food preferences, food availability and hunting pressure. Each has its effect on deer movement and, consequently, on the number of deer seen on any hunting trip. However, none of these factors impacts the behavior of a whitetail more than does pressure from other hunters. Because of the overlap in hunting seasons, I notice this abrupt change in deer behavior about the third week in October.

I notice this particularly for bucks. For example, squirrel and grouse season, and the early muzzleloader season for antlerless deer opened on October 13 last year. The increase of hunters coupled with a change in feeding patterns, may have been two reasons why I saw fewer deer in the third week of archery season than I did the first two weeks. To make matters worse, the deer I did see seemed to be extremely wary of any unusual noises or shapes.

I hunt on a large dairy farm, and when returning to my truck after an evening



BUCK RUBS are an added bonus to any mid-season scouting mission. By carefully noting the side of the tree that was rubbed, a hunter can determine the direction the buck was going. This could give valuable insight if the trail leads to a feeding area or to an area of heavy cover.

hunt, I usually encounter deer feeding in the fields. However, this past year was different. By the third week of October, it was unusual to see deer feeding in open areas. It seemed the deer had become completely nocturnal. If I did see deer after quitting time, it was almost always does and their young.

What I call mid-season bowhunting begins about two weeks after opening day, when deer are undisturbed, to just before the beginning of the rut in late October or early November. I've killed more bucks within the first 10 days of the season, because deer are in their normal feeding patterns and don't know they are being hunted. Last year, I didn't have that advantage. The overlap in hunting seasons meant the deer were no longer undisturbed, at least on the farm I was hunting, and the rut hadn't yet started. The bucks were lying low and my usually reliable hunting strategies were not working. The deer were there, though, and I was determined to find them.

Deer encountering an increase of human activity in their home range often shift to areas where pressure is diminished. The good news is that such a shift may not be far away. Studies have shown bucks live in a home range of about 1½ square miles; does about half that. This means even if few deer are seen, they are still around and that they haven't migrated to another county as some might think.

When hunting pressured deer at mid-season, I concentrate on areas of thick cover as far from roads as possible. The area should have an adequate but nearby supply of good quality food, because wary deer tend to move very late in the afternoon, and will feed much closer to their bedding areas than they did earlier in the season.

Before the onset of the rut, deer are concerned only with feeding and resting. Hunting pressure will not cause a deer to stop feeding, it will affect when it will feed, though. One of my favorite mid-season bowhunting strategies is to set up my

treestand in a woodlot about 10 yards from a field edge. There must be a reason to do so, of course, and a subtle deer trail is always a sufficient reason. Deer may not come out into a field to feed until after dark, but they may linger within the woodlot.

At mid-season, deer, especially bucks, can't be as easily patterned as they could only a few weeks earlier. They don't use the same trails, nor do they necessarily feed on the same foods every evening. Additionally, they may ignore certain foods, such as apples that proved irresistible only a few weeks earlier. If I have an area of good deer cover with adequate fresh sign, I have faith even if I don't see deer.

Whitetails use many different routes to get to a food source, and I assume it's only a matter of time before one comes my way. However, this strategy has its drawbacks and could backfire because it's sometimes difficult to determine what the preferred food source might be and, therefore, it's easy to be hunting in the wrong area.

Last season, there was a bountiful acorn crop where I hunt. As most hunters know, acorns are a highly preferred whitetail food, and in years of good supply may constitute more than half of a whitetail's diet. The downside of this is that deer may abandon other previously preferred food sources, so being set up in one of these areas often results in hunters not seeing deer. This is apparently what happened to me last season. I was convinced the stand I was hunting would prove to be productive, but instead of being in the flats near the agricultural crops where I expected them to be, the deer were high on the ridge tops gluttonously feeding on the tons of acorns littering the ground.

Abundant acorns may be good for the deer but bad for hunting. Because the acorns are such a valuable source of carbohydrates, deer may feed in these areas until the acorn crop is completely consumed. They return to the other food sources, such as corn, sumac or apples, only when the

acorns are gone. The problem with hunting in an area where there is high acorn production is that the mast is usually spread over a large area. When it comes to moving, deer feeding on acorns have a ground speed of zero, so, when facing mid-season doldrums, be prepared to do some in-season scouting. When I hunt good cover and don't see deer, as much as it pains me to miss an evening of hunting, I do some in-season scouting.

The old standby scouting method of searching for fresh droppings and tracks is still, in my opinion, the best way to find deer, especially before the rut begins. This may seem obvious, but if I don't find fresh deer sign, I assume the deer are somewhere else and search the woods until I find what I'm looking for.

If I give up an evening of hunting to scout, I set out to prove or disprove my hunches by searching for fresh sign in places I suspect the deer might be. Buck rubs and scrapes are an added bonus to any mid-season scouting mission, and can tell the hunter if there are any truly big bucks in the area. In addition, by carefully noting the side of the tree that was rubbed, a hunter can determine the direction the buck was going. This could give valuable insight if the trail leads to a feeding area or to an area of heavy cover. Because rubbing may begin in September, be certain the sign you find is fresh. Keep in mind that in areas with a low buck to doe ratio, such as we have in many Pennsylvania counties, rubbing and scraping sign can be hard to find, so it's important to observe any sign carefully.

If the rut hasn't begun and bucks are unusually reclusive, I try to catch them soon after they become active in the evening or just before they bed in the morning. I try to be on watch for the first few hours of the morning and the last three hours of the evening. In addition, I try to have at least one of my stands located near thick cover where deer are likely to bed.

Last season, after deciding I was hunt-

ing the wrong area, I moved one of my portable treestands closer to a cutover area I suspected harbored deer. There were a few oaks around my stand, and I hoped they would attract a buck heading to the thick cover to rest after a night of feeding. The following morning I got to get to my stand about a half hour sooner than I usually did. Knowing the area well, I didn't need a light to find my way, and after carefully climbing the tree, I strapped myself safely into my stand and settled back to wait for dawn. About 15 minutes later the unmistakable cadence of a deer walking in the leaves brought me to attention. A deer approached and began feeding on the acorns.

As night began to fade, I could see white antlers in the darkness below. Legal shooting time was still about a half hour away, and I could only hope the acorns would keep the buck around. Time passed and the buck continued to feed. I needed only about 10 more minutes for legal shooting light, but the buck had a different agenda, because a few minutes before shooting time he turned and disappeared into the thick cover from where he had come.

I didn't get a shot, but the encounter definitely proved I was on the right trail. I hunted the area for the next several days, but saw only a few antlerless deer. Finally, on October 29, I arrowed a nice buck that wasn't in as much of a hurry as the one I had seen earlier.

It took me nearly four weeks to fill my tag, but I thoroughly enjoyed the challenge. There is no single factor explaining deer movement or lack of it. Rather, many things in the whitetail's environment affect behavior during a particular phase of archery season. To be consistently successful, hunters need to be aware of the changes in deer behavior occurring during the season. In addition, we need to be ready to react to those changes. Learning how to deal with deer in the weeks after the season opens and before the rut begins is to me one of the greatest challenges of bowhunting. □

When choosing a shotgun or rifle, don't go with what someone tells you that you need; go with what feels comfortable and fits.

Guns for the Hunter

I'M ALMOST ashamed to admit this," a man said as we shook hands, "but for deer hunting I use a Savage 221 single-shot .30-30. I'm sure you know the Savage 221 is a combination rifle/shotgun. Mine has a 12-gauge shotgun barrel and a .30-30 rifle barrel. My uncle gave it to me right after I came home from World War II. I have no idea how old it is," he added.

"There's nothing wrong with hunting with a single-shot. If I recall, the Model 221 dates back to around 1939 and was offered only with .30-30 rifle barrel and a 12-gauge shotgun barrel. Savage also made a Model 219 that had a .22 Hornet rifle barrel and a 20-gauge shotgun barrel," I explained.

"Down through the years I've thought about getting a better deer outfit, but a variety of problems and mishaps always took what extra money I had. Now, I'm determined to buy a new outfit, and I've come to you for some advice."

"I'm all for buying a new rifle," I cut in, "but just how has the Savage performed for you over the years. Have you been successful with it?"

He laughed for a moment and then said, "Success is one of the reasons I haven't bought a new rifle. I didn't score the first year, with open sights, but after having a Weaver 4x scope installed I've taken 18 bucks and a half dozen or so antlerless deer. My wife can't understand why I would want another rifle, and so far, I haven't

been able to convince her, either."

"She has a good point," I added. "I'm beginning to wonder why you want to change, too," I jokingly said.

"I've always wanted a slide action rifle, and Remington's 760 Gamemaster in .30-06 appeals to me. Do you think it's my best bet?"

"The Remington 760 is here to stay." I told him. "In fact, it's sometimes called Pennsylvania's deer rifle. I've zeroed in dozens and haven't found one that was not exceptionally accurate. In fact, one of the best 5-shot groups I've ever fired with a conventional big game rifle was a 11/16-inch group from a .30-06 760 Gamemaster."

When the fellow departed, he was positive a new 760 Remington pump would be in his hands on opening day of buck season. I never heard from him again, so I don't know if he ever got his 760 or not.

The work I've done over the years has exposed me to hundreds of rifles and shotguns. And while I'm sure I haven't fired all the brands and models, I've a lot of experience on the range and in the field with most of the guns hunters use. I've learned that there are many myths connected with hunting guns. There is a general feeling that a hunting gun should be a modern expensive outfit. Today's small game hunters are exchanging the single-shots, doubles and pumps for sleek autoloaders. And while an autoloader may allow a

hunter to fire more shots in less time, it won't make a hunter a better shot.

An acquaintance of mine used a 12-gauge double and rarely fired twice at rabbits and grouse. He was a fine shot and knew when to fire. An autoloader wouldn't have produced any more game for him. When I was in high school, an elderly neighbor used a 16-gauge single-shot hammer gun. My brothers said he was the best rabbit hunter in our neck of the woods. For him, a double, pump or autoloader would have just been extra weight.

The secret with shotgun hunting is to use a shotgun that fits — both physically and psychologically. I cut my shotgun stocks to 13¹/₈-inches from the face of the trigger to the middle of the butt pad. I prefer an over/under with 26-inch barrels with improved cylinder and modified chokes. I prefer these more open chokes because most of my small game hunting is in patches of pines and thick brush, and shots are within 30 yards.

I've partly explained here that there are certain basics each hunter must confront when buying a gun. With shotguns, let's find out what a new buyer should consider. Most of the time hunters are concerned with the type of action. This is an important aspect that should be carefully thought out. Just because an uncle or friend uses a certain action with good success is no guarantee you'll have similar results. Keep in

mind that pumps and autoloaders have long receivers, which makes the gun longer than a two-barrel outfit with the same length barrels. An additional four to six inches of total gun length will work against the brush hunter.

The belief that long barrels shoot harder and farther than short barrels is a myth. A shotgun barrel more than 25 inches (maybe even a bit shorter) does not contribute anything to velocity or how far the shot charge travels. Short, compact shotguns are not as smooth to swing as longer pumps and autoloaders, but that is not a disadvantage in thick cover. The compact outfit, however, might not be a good choice for dove and pheasant hunters.

I'm convinced that too much choke is worse than too little. For woodcock, grouse and rabbit hunting, stay clear of full chokes. For years I used a 20-gauge Remington with a 26-inch improved cylinder barrel for rabbits and grouse. A friend who often hunted with me had a 12-gauge pump with a full choke 28-inch barrel. After about four or five shots at rabbits in a dense pine thicket, he disgustedly said that all he was doing was cutting 6-inch furrows. He finally switched to an improved cylinder barrel, and I got fewer rabbits when I hunted with him because he was connecting more.

Even the position of the safety should be considered. While we can all learn to use any safety, it's an aspect that's still worth thinking about. My brother Cull used a pump with the safety on the back of the trigger guard, and it was always difficult for him because most of his hunting had been with a double barrel that had a tang safety.

Don't be afraid to have the stock shortened. A shotgun should come up in one fluid motion and settle into the shoulder pocket without snagging under the arm or

Tom Fegely



A SHOTGUN should come up in one fluid motion and settle into the shoulder pocket without snagging under the arm or getting tangled with a hunting coat.

getting tangled with a hunting coat. A time-tested method is to nestle the butt plate in the crook of the arm to see if the shooting finger will easily reach the trigger. I don't mean just the tip of the finger, but at least one full joint around the trigger. I have never been a strong advocate for that type of measurement, though. A 14½-inch stock is too long for many shooters. If possible, have a gunsmith cut the stock to 13¾-inches. Try bringing the shotgun quickly to the shoulder while wearing your small game hunting coat. If it catches or doesn't come up smoothly, have him saw off another 3/8 of an inch. Keep in mind he will have to remove extra wood if a thick rubber butt pad will be installed. This may appear to be an untruth, but a thin rubber pad is better than a thick spongy pad, because a spongy pad can make a shotgun bounce from the shoulder.

There's more to selecting the right shotgun than just the gauge or action type. The same philosophy holds true when a new big game rifle is being considered. I'm referring to medium-size big game, such as deer, black bear and antelope. Although a .270 Winchester or .30-06 will kill any big game animal, for grizzly bear, moose and other truly big game animals, the more powerful magnums are normally preferred.

For here in Pennsylvania, though, don't be swayed by any sort of notion that a magnum cartridge is the answer to your shooting problems. The power of the magnums is just not needed for the relatively smaller animals here. For which cartridge is the best for whitetail deer, there is no single answer.

The .30-30 Winchester had its beginning in the late 19th century and is still being used with great success. In one sense, the .30-06 gave birth to the .270 Winchester in 1925, and it still ranks high as a favorite for many types of big game hunting. Today, newer cartridges are stealing some of the spotlight. Remington's 7mm-08 and .280 cartridges come to mind. The 7mm-08 probably will sound the death knell for

the Winchester .284, and the .280 Remington stands on near equal terms with the .30-06.

The recent emergence of short action magnums could cause problems for all the old conventional cartridges. Remington's .300 Short Action Magnum, along with its 7mm Ultra Short Action Magnum are two examples. Some are hailing the short action magnum as a lifesaver for the big game hunter. Not quite so fast, I say. Let's take a closer look to see what they offer. Normally, the shorter bolt stroke is emphasized, but they also produce higher velocities with less powder from shorter barrels. These are certainly worth considering, and these factors may have a strong appeal with future generations of big game hunters. However, I do not believe they're going to send the old standbys riding into the proverbial sunset anytime soon.

There's no getting around it that the short action magnum has a place in the big game hunting realm, but they are not for everyone. They are still magnum cartridges, with higher recoil and muzzle blast. There should be a ballistic reason for switching. A prime reason would be the need for the extra velocity and energy output. That's a personal decision. Are you unsuccessful because your 7mm-08, .270 Winchester or .30-06 lacks sufficient power for the game you hunt? The late Jack O'Conner had complete faith in the .270 Winchester and took dozens of big game animals with it. Don't forget, he was also a superb shot. I think there will be plenty of us who will put our faith in the .30-30, .270, 7mm-08, .280, .30-06 and the 7mm Magnum. There's no reason to believe the short action magnums will trample the old favorites into the dust anytime soon. □

Fun Game answers:

B, O, W, H, U, N, T, E, R
Bowhunter.

The Thrilling Chill

OCTOBER is a time of chafing, of restlessness. It's a time when the hard straight lines and corners, cadaverous air and the opaque ceilings of interiors are most unacceptable. It is in October that one most resists resignation to confinement anywhere within walls.

When October returns, burnishing first the ridge tops and high points, then bleeding down the sidehills to pool, finally, in the sheltered hollows around green islands of hemlock, I ask myself: "Did I forget what this was like, or was I just not paying attention in all the autumns before?"

October stuns and seduces. It makes you question why the world does not take a month off from its business to listen to geese, or to watch moonshine on the curve of wooded hills and the silver bends of rivers. Perhaps the world knows it dare not sample October too deeply, lest it lose its resolve to build and change and civilize. Perhaps it knows that if it did so it would be moved to return its attention to the tracks of deer and the swirlings of fish.

Take your pick, anywhere, anything; the wide vista from mountaintops or the landscape of a leaf, stony path or rolling cloud. With color, clarity, texture, a thrilling chill, a fragrant rain, this time of year heralds ending, poignant and irreversible. But there is balance in this wind. If October portends an ending, it also stirs us to live.

There is an encounter I reconstruct when I try within languid summers to recall what October is like. It was evening, a chill had fallen that could not be felt under the sun of the afternoon. The chill alone was enough to excite and enliven. A new dampness honed every scent, named each one in the nostrils — drying grass, mineral earth and leaves that had spent themselves in the summer. There was a path, uphill, winding, and so narrow that ferns the color of new leather and old butter lashed your legs. Deep shadow crouched under a canopy afire in the light.

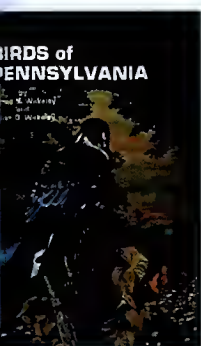
Around one tight curve in the trail stood a buck. He did not run at my approach.

Instead, he stiffened and stared from black pools. Both ears swiveled back under the antlers, pinned tight against the skull. His black snout rose and quivered, searching. Finally, he turned and walked straight away from me, stiff legs brushing aside the same yellow ferns, his wide rump glowing white in the shadows. When I walked up to the place where he had stood, his scent was thick and warm and alive — a presence. It was unmistakable but at the same time elusive, blended of the taste of overdone deer chops and the hard edgy smell of clean steel. I stood there, breathing in his odor, hearing twigs snap and oak leaves rustle under his hooves. A deeper chill drifted through the trees, rattling parchment leaves, and I turned toward home and the winter to remember.



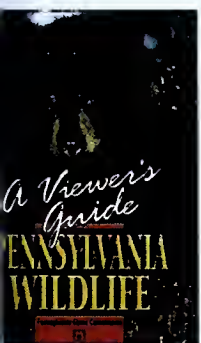
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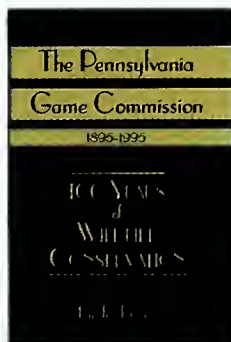
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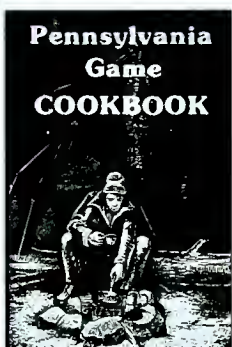
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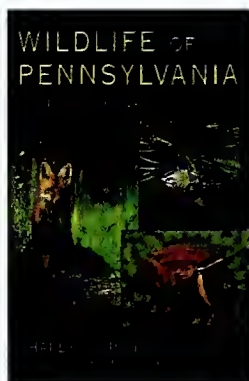
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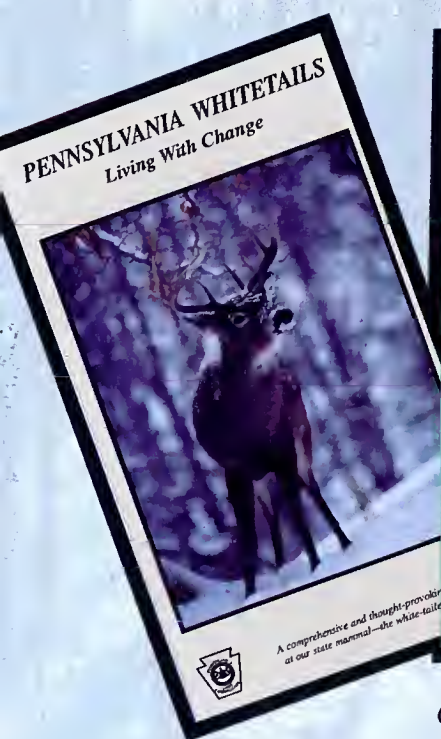
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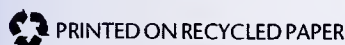
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Newsstand consultant, Celtic Moon Publishing, 1-877-730-6263



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Deer Season 2002-03

DEER SEASON is just around the corner, and this one promises to be unlike any we have ever experienced here before. Antler restrictions, coupled with concurrent antlered and antlerless firearms seasons and a record antlerless deer license allocation are, in concert, designed to dramatically shift the hunting emphasis from bucks to does.

Over the past several months, to explain what and why these changes have been made, we've been running a series of deer management articles. PGC biologist Bret Wallingford introduced the series by writing about how our deer hunting tradition has evolved over the past hundred or so years, and how, generally, we've gone from having to protect deer to scientifically managing them based on biological, ecological and social factors. In August, Wallingford explained why this year's antlerless license allocation is so high — the highest ever. With somewhere around 85,000 bucks expected to survive the hunting seasons because of antler restrictions, this year's high antlerless license allocation is designed to offset those "extra" bucks by increasing the antlerless deer harvest accordingly.

For September, Penn State graduate student Justin Vreeland wrote about the factors that affect fawn survival during the first six months or so of their lives. Tracking 218 fawns — more than in any other single study in North America — it was learned that the leading cause of fawn mortality was predation, followed by starvation and diseases. Interestingly, hunting was found to be a minor mortality factor.

In October, PGC biometrician Chris Rosenberry answered many of the questions surrounding the new antler restrictions: Why the restrictions are not the same across the state, why number of points (see page 48) instead of antler spread was used, and if protecting smaller bucks might degrade the quality of bucks in the future, are just some of the topics he addressed.

This month Wallingford and Rosenberry present the results of the study conducted to see if we might have too few bucks for breeding. Based on examinations of nearly 2,000 female deer, we were able to determine that breeding takes place from September into February, but with most occurring in November, when it should be occurring. In coming months the concurrent firearms seasons, an update on the buck movement study and proposed new wildlife management units will be featured.

Deer hunting has been continually evolving. New antler restrictions, concurrent antlered and antlerless seasons, early muzzleloader season: these latest changes are just a continuation of that process. A hundred years ago, white-tailed deer were almost nonexistent here, and early hunting regulations were designed to protect the females, to allow the herd to grow. Today, for a variety of reasons, we have too many deer over much of the state, and the emphasis on deer harvests has shifted to the females.

While some might view this shift as bad, it's actually just another example of how hunters and wildlife agencies have brought a species back from the brink of extinction to a healthy level. — *Bob Mitchell*

letters

Editor:

In the August "Conservation News" I read that the Game Commission paid \$109,613 for the Traxler property, which consisted of 2.4 acres. Am I reading this right? If not, why was this property so expensive?

S. YANCIS
WILKES-BARRE

The selling price seems high because the property included a house, garage and barn. Also, this property was purchased not by the Game Commission, but by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, and \$82,209 of the purchase price came from the federal Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program.

Editor:

We need to find a way to rally pheasant hunters. If more become involved, the better chance the pheasant has. There used to be around 800,000 pheasant hunters during the bird's peak. Now there are about 200,000. If just 10 percent got involved, in Pheasants Forever, perhaps, it would help the wild pheasant dramatically. I am only 15, so I missed the pheasant heyday, but I'm willing to fight to bring it back to at least a huntable number.

D. HEALY
WOODBRIDGE, NJ

Editor:

Reading your September issue I noticed the editorial and article on the PGC's education programs. This summer I participated in a 17-hour teacher workshop on Pennsylvania elk and deer,

taught by many employees of the Game Commission and other agencies. Many subjects in your September issue, such as CWD and fawn survival, were covered in detail.

Wildlife Education Supervisor Pete Aiken brought in experts on elk, tourism, social issues, crop damage, food plots, and the impact of elk and deer on our forests. The presentations, lectures and field trips offered the finest instruction possible.

I have already shared my materials with other teachers in my school, and we will use them to help meet the Pennsylvania standards on environment and ecology.

The Game Commission does much more than just law enforcement. I was amazed at the many ways the Game Commission is working to protect the future and the diversity of wildlife.

L. FETCHEN
RINGGOLD HIGH SCHOOL
WASHINGTON COUNTY

Editor:

In your article about CWD, you stated that CWD does not transfer to humans. Don't be too sure, for in England and Scotland, this disease did jump from cattle to humans.

L. ANDERSON
DENVER

What jumped from cattle to humans was mad cow disease, which is similar to CWD, but not the same. To date, there is

no evidence that CWD is transmissible to humans.

Editor:

In July I was driving near Hooversville when I noticed a doe in the middle of the road. Not strange for Pennsylvania. However, this doe had both lanes of traffic blocked and refused to move. She stood there for a few minutes, occasionally stomping, and staring intently at the hillside by the road.

As you can guess, two fawns came slowly through the weeds, touched the pavement and then darted across to the other side, with the doe bringing up the rear.

I always figured deer never seemed too bright, judging from the carcasses along the roads, but now I'm starting to think otherwise.

J. SPICHER
WINDBER

Editor:

Upon moving to Oklahoma to pursue my education I find myself missing the outdoors of Pennsylvania. I hunt here, but I find myself dreaming of hunting with my dad and friends back home. Therefore, I look forward to *Game News* every month, to help me drift back to those days. Keep up the good work of keeping Penn's Woods alive for those of us who can't be there as much as we would like.

M. McELHANEY
WEATHERFORD, OK

Your comments are welcome. Mail them to "Letters," 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Letters will be edited for brevity and clarity.

Off Key Turkey

I SPENT the entire opening day of fall turkey season searching for fresh sign. I had found old sign, but nothing to get excited about. Then, suddenly, I spotted it. The evidence along the trail revealed turkeys in the area — many turkeys. Furthermore, the footprints in the mud, the feathers and the droppings all indicated turkeys were nearby. I realized, however, I probably wouldn't catch up to them that day, because the sun would soon be setting behind the mountain.

Normally I locate flocks before the season. Scouting trips fit right in with squirrel hunting. Shots at squirrels afford needed practice, and the squirrels provide a delightful change in the menu. Most importantly, though, the trips allow me to locate turkeys. Then, when the birds come in season, I can spend more time hunting and less time scouting.

This year, though, the leaves were unusually late in falling, and scratchings would not be evident until a day or two before opening day. For this reason, I decided to forgo preseason scouting altogether. It was a mistake. I should have realized that there would be ample turkey sign on trails or clearings regardless of the leaves, and that information alone would have provided a good start.

I began to consider my options while looking at the fresh sign. The trail where I had found it meandered for miles through a valley. This section was new to me, although I had walked other parts of the trail, closer to the road, in previous years. Not far to my right was a river. To the left were a few hemlocks, and beyond the hemlocks an oak-covered mountain. Throughout the valley there were tall hemlocks interspersed with oaks and mountain laurel. At this point I was more than three miles from the road. With daylight quickly running out, I continued slowly out the trail, looking for more sign and trying to form a strategy.

To return to the truck, I took a course through the open oak forest on the side of the mountain above the trail. I thought any flocks in the area may have fed there and, if so, perhaps I would be able to locate some of their scratchings. Besides, there was always the chance I might spot a flock in the few remaining minutes of shooting time. More than anything, though, I needed to confirm that turkeys were still using the area. After a little hiking, I found more fresh scratchings.

After spotting the fresh sign I walked straight down the hill to the trail along the river. There, I placed a rock to the side of the trail to mark the spot. I realized this spot was near where I had seen the sign earlier that day. As I walked

By Joe Fleckenstein



toward the truck I felt confident. True, I had not shot a turkey, or even seen one, but I had had an enjoyable day and gained valuable information.

The next hunting day I was in the woods early. In the dark I hiked down the trail to where I had placed the marker and entered the woods. Quietly, I made my way to a point where the hemlocks met the oaks. I set out a decoy, placed an orange band around an oak tree and sat motionless against the trunk. I figured the turkeys roosted in the large hemlocks at the lower elevations and then fed in the open forest higher up. For an hour I did nothing but listen. I was hoping to hear turkeys flying down from their roosts or calling. I didn't hear anything, though, and after an hour I decided to call.

On opening day I had seen signs of adult gobblers as well as young birds. My plan was to initially try for a longbeard, but I knew I'd take a young bird if given the chance. For the longbeards, I would use a coarse cluck, whereas for first-year birds I would use either a kee-kee call or a quiet cluck. I tried a coarse cluck and listened. Nothing. A little later, I repeated the call. Again there was no answer. Suddenly, I was startled when a goshawk streaked past my shoulder. It landed on a branch over the decoy and began making a tremendous ruckus. While watching the decoy, the hawk flapped its wings, cackled and pranced back and forth on the branch. I certainly

enjoyed the experience, but eventually it saw me and flew away.

Because of all the commotion made by the hawk, I figured there would be little chance of calling a turkey, so I stood up to retrieve the decoy. But as I did, I immediately heard leaves crunching not 50 yards away and then some putting. A flock had been coming in, silently, and I had blown it. Disappointed, I packed the decoy in my shoulder bag, grabbed my fluorescent orange and moved out along the ridge. I hunted until dusk without seeing anymore turkeys. Nevertheless, I considered the day another success. I had come close to turkeys, and I knew they were still in the area.

Several days later I was near the same spot, and this time I promised myself I would wait a minimum of two hours before moving. I kept my promise, but didn't see or hear anything. It was cold that morning, and after two hours of sitting motionless, I was ready for some hiking. I remained convinced turkeys were nearby.

I decided to try for a young bird. Young turkeys may not be as challenging at times, but they are, nevertheless, great sport. If there were young birds around, I thought they would probably be near the hemlocks in the valley. The thicker cover there affords them some degree of protection from predators as well as hunters. In the past, I've had good luck finding young turkeys in that type of terrain. I also reasoned there would have been more hunting activity closer to the road, and that pressure may have pushed birds farther back. I gathered my gear



and slowly moved toward the river, deeper into the game lands.

Along the river I found occasional scratch marks where turkeys had been feeding, but the sign was a day or two old. I decided to walk slowly, and quietly, and to call sparingly, and about every 20 minutes I gave a quiet cluck and occasionally a kee-kee call. Shortly after noon, I came across scratchings that I guessed were no more than a few hours old. I sat down to wait and listen. There was a chance that I, unknowingly, had scattered a feeding flock. I called but got no answer, so I slowly continued my course along the river. I went about 50 yards, stopped and clucked on my call. Again, there was no answer, so I resumed walking, and then I thought I heard something behind me. I stopped in my tracks. It may have been a quiet cluck or merely the wind.

A minute or two went by and then I heard *kee-kee, kee-kee, kee-kee*. However, the call seemed off key and artificial. The kee-kee run lost call is a high-pitched, shrill call. The call I heard was a much lower pitch than any kee-kee call I'd ever heard. I concluded that the call must have been from another hunter, and I judged it poor calling at that. In the past I've frequently heard hunters who sounded like turkeys, and when such

situations were encountered, I proceeded in the opposite direction.

With pack and shotgun in hand, I started to leave, then stopped to think. It occurred to me that I've also heard turkeys that sounded like hunters. Experience has taught me that all turkeys do not sound alike. I quickly placed the decoy about 30 yards to my left. After placing my orange band around the largest tree I could find, I heard another kee-kee call in my front. A second call sounded to my left. These calls sounded more like turkeys and, although I hadn't seen a bird, I felt confident I was dealing with a small flock. After the turkeys called again, I replied with a muted cluck. I raised my shotgun into position on my knee and got ready.

Finally, the first turkey appeared. It was a young hen, a cautious bird that soon disappeared behind some laurel. Then a young tom followed in the hen's footsteps. It was walking cautiously until it saw the decoy, then it quickly came in. I took aim as it walked broadside and fired. I had my prize.

As I carried the young tom down the trail, I came to the turkey sign found on opening day. I stopped for a minute, looked at the sign, and then shifted the weight of the turkey to my other arm and continued down the trail. □

Books in Brief

(Not available from the Game Commission.)

Trees of Pennsylvania And The Northeast, by Charles Fergus, Stackpole Books, 5067 Ritter Road, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055-6921, www.stackpolebooks.com, 272 pp., \$19.95 plus \$4 shipping & handling, PA residents add 6% sales tax. This book contains natural history narratives and easy to follow identification information for well over 100 species, from white pines and red oaks, to the less common Allegheny chinkapin and devil's walking stick, and even introduced species such as Austrian pine and European alder. It is a highly readable handbook and ready reference complemented by wonderful line drawings.



Double Trophy Friday

By Dale L. Miller

LATE LAST WINTER my wife and I hosted a cabin fever party for friends and family. We feasted on the bounty of the past hunting season, which included rabbits, squirrels, grouse, Canada geese and, of course, venison. We all brought pictures of our families, vacations and of our hunts, and we spent hours telling hunting stories.

After the party my wife Amy commented that Gary, Jim and I

constantly interrupt each other's stories to add our details or supporting information. She was amazed that we don't get offended at each other's interruptions and continue on without missing a beat to our tales. Maybe that is why we are such good friends, and perhaps that's why I tell this story for Jim. I'll give him a little credit, as he told me some of the details, and he did do the shooting.

Jim worked half a day that Friday in November then rushed home, ate a quick

lunch and planned to hunt at a farm on the way to camp. He arrived at the farm and hiked into the woods, carrying his bow and treestand. He was settled in at 3 o'clock, and after about an hour he saw movement. To his surprise, it wasn't deer, but rather, six turkeys feeding in his direction. He was tempted to cluck and call to them, but because they were already coming his way, he kept quiet. The turkeys were headed for an oat field. Jim waited until the flock went behind some trees, and then drew his bow. When they reappeared one hen moved to within 17 yards. Jim waited for what he thought would be his best opportunity and released his arrow. The arrow connected, and in a flurry of feathers, frantically flapping wings and flying leaves, the hen took off. It managed to get only about eight feet off the ground and traveled about 50 yards before crashing to the ground. The bird never fluttered once it hit the ground.

While filling out his tag Jim soaked in the beautiful November afternoon. He decided that taking this turkey with his bow was his most satisfying hunt ever. His evening, however, wasn't over.

I'm not sure if Jim thought he

really might see deer, but knowing him, just being in the woods and hunting was reason enough for him to stay. He stowed the bird at the base of the tree and made his ascent once again.

Before long he noticed movement. It was a buck, and it even passed within 35 yards, but Jim didn't shoot, because he limits his shots to a maximum of 30 yards. He was happy with the turkey, but still disappointed he had to pass up a chance at what would have been his first buck taken with a bow.

He watched the deer meander into a field and begin feeding. Jim said, "Before long I could hear George's tractor heading out the lane in my general direction. At this hour I knew he'd be towing a load of manure, and I knew that the disturbance would probably be the end of the day for me."

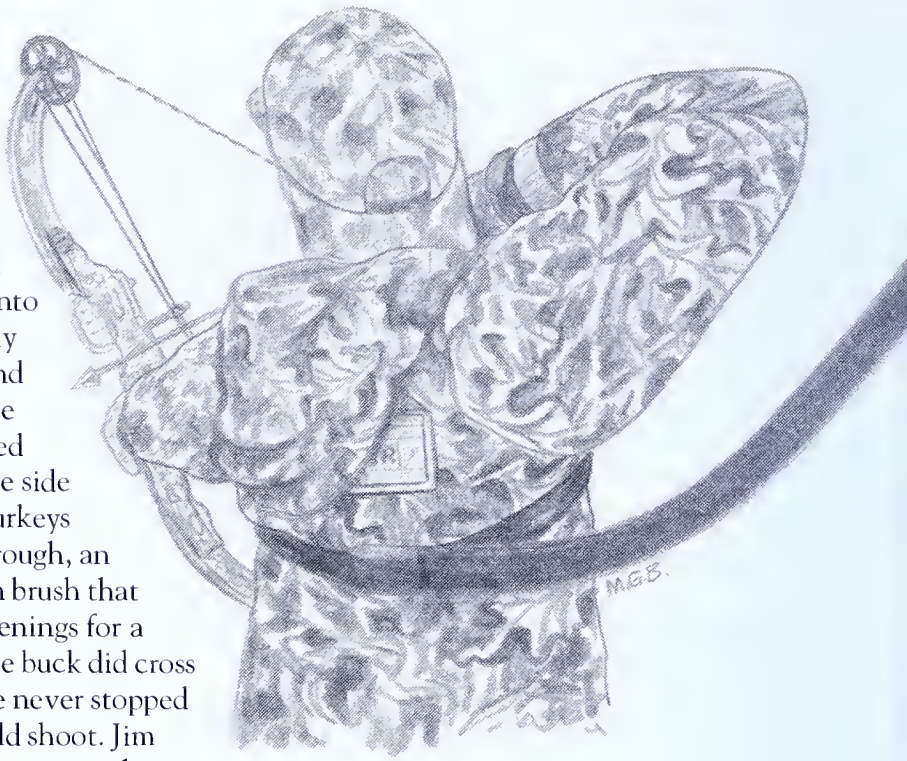
Jim was wrong, however, because deer at this farm often feed in the fields while the farmer does his



chores. When the farmer turned his tractor to return to the barn, the buck slipped back into the woods, only 20 yards beyond Jim's stand. The deer then passed on the opposite side of where the turkeys had moved through, an area thick with brush that offered few openings for a shot. When the buck did cross an opening, he never stopped where Jim could shoot. Jim recalls, "He was approaching a 2-foot-wide gap in the brush that would offer a clear shot. On the spur of the moment I decided to try to stop him. I brought the bow to full draw and made a chirping bark like an annoyed gray squirrel. The buck stopped and stood there long enough for the arrow to find its mark. He took off and I watched him run for at least 120 yards."

Jim sat there and listened to the tractor fade away as darkness settled in. He said he thought a lot about Gary and me in those moments, and he graciously credits us with a lot of what he's learned about deer hunting. Finally, he descended his tree and went to get Gary to help recover the buck, not wanting to risk losing it, or worry Gary when he didn't show up at camp.

Jim and Gary recovered the deer



without much difficulty, and when I got to camp later that evening, as he told and retold his story, Jim continued to give credit to Gary and me for sharing our experiences, methods and techniques with him. He thanked us over and over again saying, "I remembered what you told me," and "I tried to do it the way you taught me."

I hunted deer the next day while Gary — who had already filled his deer tag — and Jim went to the farm to try and find the turkeys. Jim set up 20 yards behind Gary and called to the birds as they flew off their roost. About five minutes later Gary got a turkey.

Yes, Jim, I think you did learn what we tried to teach you, and I don't mean about turkeys or deer. Oh, by the way, your double trophy Friday wasn't bad either. □

2001-02 Turkey, Small Game and Furbearer Harvests

By Christopher S. Rosenberry, PhD
PGC Wildlife Biometrician

I DON'T BELIEVE those survey results. None of the hunters I know think like that or have been that successful." This comment summarizes a vast majority of negative responses one receives when presenting survey results. If the results of the survey do not agree with one's individual or group experience, the results are judged to be wrong, biased, or made up by those conducting the survey.

Trends we see at the state level may or may not accurately reflect each hunter's experience. Hunters are familiar with their personal experiences and maybe experiences of friends and family. This familiarity results in knowledge of one, 10 or 20 individual hunting experiences. This level of knowledge pales in comparison to results presented in the following tables. These tables represent tens of thousands

of experiences of hunters and furtakers over the years. This year alone, results are based on more than 12,000 responses.

Each year we survey a sample of Pennsylvania hunters and furtakers to determine their success and hunting effort. Each purchaser of a general hunting license has a 1 in 50 chance of receiving a Game Take Survey. Each purchaser of a furtaker license has a 1 in 5 chance of receiving a Furtaker Survey. Because we cannot monitor harvest of every hunter or trapper, we rely on hunters and furtakers to accurately complete the surveys. Without cooperation of surveyed hunters and furtakers, harvest and participation data become nearly impossible to collect. Using information reported by hunters and furtakers, we use standard survey analysis techniques to calculate overall harvests and participation esti-

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TABLE 1. HARVEST BY SPECIES, 1997-2001.

Year	Spring Turkey	Fall Turkey	Rabbit	Grouse	Squirrel	Pheasant ^a	Woodcock
1997	30,956	37,398	827,520	187,770	1,352,038	219,864	23,878
1998	32,661	33,628	911,003	183,468	1,331,051	216,669	31,602
1999	37,806	40,718	715,862	177,355	1,236,108	211,257	25,704
2000	43,815	44,865	770,841	145,525	1,276,009	233,537	31,199
2001	49,186	48,008	701,551	159,610	1,276,603	244,282	32,504

Year	Quail ^a	Dove	Geese	Duck ^a	Hare	Woodchuck	Crow
1997	1,766	506,677	115,506	188,034	1,432	1,251,145	184,944
1998	241	562,348	131,831	146,050	2,507	1,204,582	247,047
1999	3,938	519,116	128,385	164,328	2,412	1,117,970	209,273
2000	4,373	478,602	194,480	185,185	1,747	1,191,114	219,773
2001	4,276	460,971	197,767	143,907	4,584	1,187,114	195,273

^aEstimates exclude harvest on shooting preserves.

TABLE 2. NUMBER OF HUNTERS, BY SPECIES, 1997-2001.

Year	Spring Turkey	Fall Turkey	Rabbit	Grouse	Squirrel	Pheasant ^a	Woodcock
1997	233,287	249,934	261,115	197,994	267,051	148,900	13,374
1998	194,819 ^b	199,696 ^b	242,509	183,511	252,738	158,497	12,907
1999	237,984	244,638	221,179	174,576	238,887	142,142	12,212
2000	231,860	230,448	229,906	162,073	238,540	149,260	12,977
2001	230,115	228,564	213,295	161,186	231,436	146,751	14,411

Year	Quail ^a	Dove	Geese	Duck ^a	Hare	Woodchuck	Crow
1997	1,009	60,178	30,574	32,180	3,723	104,561	30,696
1998	1,116	57,579	32,238	34,103	5,506	92,517	31,390
1999	1,550	49,551	33,734	31,503	4,379	90,853	29,131
2000	1,870	52,496	35,628	31,998	3,666	99,294	29,371
2001	2,029	51,144	38,292	31,893	4,930	99,787	33,343

^a Estimates don't include number of hunters on shooting preserves.

^b These low figures may have been caused by not including a Turkey Management Area map on the 1998-99 survey.

TABLE 3. HARVEST PER 100 HUNTER-DAYS, BY SPECIES, 1997-2001.

Year	Spring Turkey	Fall Turkey	Rabbit	Grouse	Squirrel	Pheasant ^a	Woodcock
1997	3.0	4.5	54.2	18.4	92.5	33.9	49.2
1998	3.7	4.9	60.0	18.5	93.5	27.9	57.1
1999	3.7	5.0	56.4	20.1	94.6	34.9	54.5
2000	4.4	5.7	59.5	17.8	101.7	35.8	55.6
2001	4.8	6.0	53.2	17.8	93.1	34.2	49.0

Year	Quail ^a	Dove	Geese	Duck ^a	Hare	Woodchuck	Crow
1997	62.2	213.0	53.9	94.5	20.9	100.8	103.5
1998	3.6	215.1	66.9	77.4	21.2	88.6	110.8
1999	78.7	249.9	55.7	86.8	35.1	97.1	120.8
2000	49.1	207.2	75.0	91.5	32.6	99.5	139.2
2001	51.2	211.9	67.2	78.3	42.3	92.7	77.8

^a Estimates exclude effort on shooting preserves.

TABLE 4. NUMBER OF HUNTERS AND TRAPPERS OF FURBEARERS, 1997-2001.

Year	Raccoon	Muskrat	Red Fox	Gray Fox	Opossum	Skunk	Mink	Coyote ^a	Weasel
1997	13,750	7,363	10,330	8,553	6,386	3,473	4,434	24,526	1,125
1998	12,794	5,900	9,982	8,594	5,558	2,948	3,512	30,016	733
1999	7,555	3,230	6,996	6,061	2,653	1,718	2,152	28,265	392
2000	6,996	3,121	7,280	6,353	2,870	1,750	2,026	28,270	509
2001	7,935	3,997	8,234	6,938	3,180	2,036	2,587	36,249	619

^a Combines estimates from Game Take Survey and Furtaker Survey.

continued from page 11

mates. In recent years, small game harvests have varied depending on species (Tables 1 and 2). Despite some declines in hunt-

ers and harvests, hunters today are generally as successful as they were five years ago (Table 3). Furtakers and furbearer harvests

have remained stable or increased since 1999 (Tables 4 and 5). Since 1999, furtaker surveys have not sampled those who purchase a junior or senior combination license, which includes furtaker privileges. In 1999 and 2000, a correction factor was used to reduce the effect of missed combination licenses. This year the correction factor was eliminated. As a result, furtaker estimates from 1999-2001 are minimum estimates.

We added nine opinion questions to this year's Game Take survey. Questions covered a variety of management issues (Table 6). The sampling error associated with these results is less than one percent. Hunters generally supported opening rabbit and pheasant seasons with squirrel and

grouse, either sex pheasant hunting on game lands, Sunday groundhog hunting, and donation of one bull elk permit to a conservation organization for auction or raffle. Hunters were split or undecided on closing quail season statewide, antler restrictions of at least 3 points, and a bear archery season. Hunters did not support legalizing crossbows in all deer firearms seasons or an October firearms season for all deer hunters. Concerning the question about antler restrictions, these results were not available until late July and were, therefore, not available for consideration in April when a decision was made. Rather, they serve as a baseline from which changes in hunter attitudes may be monitored over the next few years.

TABLE 5. HARVEST OF FURBEARERS, 1997-2001.

Year	Raccoon	Muskrat	Red Fox	Gray Fox	Opossum	Skunk	Mink	Coyote ^a	Weasel
1997	194,696	216,066	36,923	26,043	60,717	12,344	14,063	6,685	1,172
1998	195,110	148,202	47,202	32,922	56,287	11,190	12,238	11,652	662
1999	96,270	88,426	34,297	21,762	28,950	6,853	12,512	8,797	336
2000	97,509	79,933	30,893	20,096	25,062	7,248	7,980	10,160	313
2001	121,810	121,994	33,003	23,275	27,192	9,245	13,214	12,363	815

^a Combines estimates from the Game Take and Furtaker surveys.

TABLE 6. RESPONSES TO OPINION QUESTIONS ON 2001-02 GAME TAKE SURVEY

Question	Strongly Support	Support	Undecided	Against	Strongly Against
1. Open season for rabbits and pheasants with squirrels and grouse.	29%	34%	19%	11%	8%
2. Either sex pheasant hunting on all SGL.	22%	28%	23%	16%	11%
3. Closing quail season statewide.	19%	17%	52%	7%	5%
4. Making crossbows legal during all firearm deer seasons.	15%	17%	16%	19%	33%
5. A rifle season in October for antlerless deer for all hunters.	20%	19%	11%	18%	32%
6. Antler restriction of at least 3 points to one antler.	24%	21%	12%	16%	27%
7. Archery season for bears during a portion of the deer archery season.	14%	24%	28%	14%	19%
8. Sunday hunting for groundhogs.	34%	27%	13%	10%	16%
9. Giving one bull elk license each year to a conservation organization to auction with proceeds used for elk management.	26%	33%	21%	7%	12%



Dad's Bear Hunting Legacy

By Michael T. Huff

MY FATHER, Thomas F. Huff, was introduced to a Pennsylvania black bear when he was a young child in the 1950s. His father, Francis Huff, got a bear in the Poconos, and he shared the bear with the hunting party. He kept the head to get mounted, gave another man the hide and a third man the meat.

After arriving home my grandfather put the head on the back porch where it would stay cool until it was mounted. It didn't stay there long, though, as my father and his three brothers took the head from the porch and hid in the bushes in front of the house. As townsfolk walked past, the young boys would stick the head out and growl. After some time the head was back on the porch and eventually on its way to the taxidermist.

Growing up, my father didn't do much bear hunting. He and his brothers spent most of their time hunting deer, but occasionally they hunted raccoons and grouse. However, spending a lot of time in the woods in the Poconos, he had many encounters with bears.

One December morning Dad was deer hunting with his brothers, and they split up and went to separate stands. While waiting for a deer to wander by, Dad's brother Bill had to answer nature's call. While in the process, he heard loud crashing in the brush, and soon a large bear came charging out, heading directly for him. The bear veered off before running him over, but it was an unnerving experience.

One year Dad shot his first deer, a

spike, with his bow. After waiting for more than an hour, he and some friends began tracking the deer. After following the trail they noticed that it looked as if someone began dragging the deer. Before long they found the buck, which had been partially eaten and then covered by a bear.

Although Dad had a lot of interesting bear experiences, he didn't take up bruin hunting until after his father's death in 1972. Dad's early bear hunts were not extensively planned out affairs. It wasn't until the 1980s that he became a dedicated bear hunter. The activity became a passion and remains one to this day. He watches bear videos and reads everything he can about bears.

In fact, Dad's bear hunting has become a year-round event. He begins scouting in the spring. He watches the evening weather, hoping for a late March or April snow in the Poconos. When this occurs, he makes every attempt to go look for sign before the snow melts. On these scouting trips he never leaves home without his two valued possessions: a compass and topographic maps. An officer in the army, Dad was the land navigator for his platoon. The map and compass skills he learned while serving his country are now relied on during scouting trips. Notes are scrupulously maintained on his maps, with all sorts of information relevant

to bear hunting.

I sometimes think Dad, having hunted in the Poconos all his life, is more familiar with every hummock, swamp and ridge than the bears that reside there. Being familiar with the land and extensive scouting, Dad has a feel for the

number of bears roaming an area, their size and their favorite haunts.

Dad also scouts for bears during the archery season. Having occasionally accompanied him on bow hunts, I eventually figured out that these were as much bear scouting trips as they were deer hunts. During these trips Dad looks for good mast crops. Areas with lots of beechnuts and acorns can be great bear habitat, especially when surrounded with ridges and swamps, which occur throughout the Poconos. On these trips Dad also looks for bear droppings, tracks, claw marks, and oh yes, occasionally deer as well.

As a boy Dad was one of seven children, and it was often hard for his family to make ends meet. However, he had a rich childhood, spending countless hours exploring the woods in the Poconos. Public outdoor recreation is a special blessing, because it's available to everyone no matter how much money they have in the bank. It is something I truly value as a citizen of Pennsylvania. Sportsmen are fortunate that the Game Commission had the foresight to purchase land to provide public hunting opportunities.



Having watched my father evolve into such a dedicated bear hunter, I knew it was only a matter of time until his dedication would pay off. On the Saturday before the 1989 bear season, Dad was at the local automobile dealer trying to complete the purchase of his first ever truck in time to take it bear hunting. The salesman told Dad he could pick up the truck in a few days, after it was "prepped." Having visions of a bear in the back of the truck, Dad hurried the prepping along and drove it off the lot that day. Today, he's still driving the same truck, 130,000 miles later and now a veteran of many bear hunting trips.

Early on the following Monday morning, Dad, in his new truck, headed for the Poconos. The new steering wheel felt good in his hands. He thought how great it was to finally have a truck after nearly 50 years. What memories he would have with that truck. Little did he know that that day his greatest memory was about to happen.

As Dad reached his hunting location he became disappointed because he had arrived later than planned and it was getting light fast. He quickly gathered his compass, maps and food. He slung his father's .30-06 Winchester Model 54 (the same gun that his father used to down a

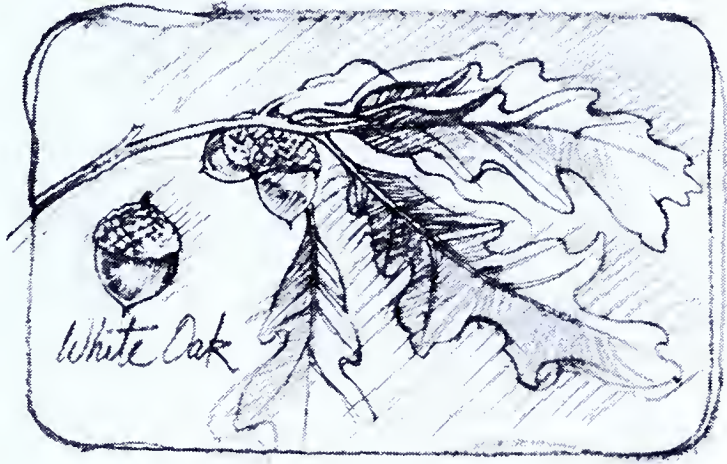
bear more than three decades earlier) on his shoulder and headed into the woods.

Noticing fresh bear droppings and tracks right away, Dad was filled with excitement. His preseason scouting had led him to the right place. The bear's trail led Dad through a brushy opening and then into a dense area full of young beech trees. It was obvious that the bear had stopped to feed on ripe beechnuts. The trail continued along a fairly open hardwood ridge, and Dad soon came to a fallen tree. Looking at the tree, he noticed bear claw marks that looked fresh.

Dad decided to stand for a while, quite content to enjoy the solitude of the woods. Leaning against the fallen tree he gazed across the terrain. He could see a thick swamp to the west and an open ridge to the east. The set-up seemed perfect. Could this be the year he would finally get a bear?

After a sandwich and a cup of tea he heard a noise on the ridge, about 100 yards away. For several seconds, which seemed like minutes, Dad saw nothing and began to wonder if the noise was another hunter or maybe a cautious deer. Then, the dark figure of a bear emerged, heading directly for him. Dad noticed white fur completely encircling the bear's neck. It looked like it was wearing a necklace. Because the bear was in the

open and seemed unalarmed, Dad figured he had plenty of time to shoot. But then, suddenly, the bear stood on its hind legs and began sniffing the air. Dad knew he would have to act fast because the bear would bolt if it picked up his scent. Not willing to take a shot at a running bear and risk wounding it, he quickly raised the rifle and put the scope crosshairs in the middle of the bear's chest. He slowly squeezed the trigger, and at the report, the 180-



grain bullet hit exactly where he had aimed and the bear rolled down the ridge.

Dad had done it; his first bear was a clean kill. As his father had done more than 30 years earlier, Dad harvested a black bear. Was it luck, was it dedication, or was it special guidance from his departed father?

I'm not a bear hunter, yet, but I know that someday I, too, will seek my own bear. □

"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

— Proverbs 22:6

A Reckoning in the Snow

By Bill Wasserman

Wyoming County WCO

DEPUTY DICK ZIKA eased his vehicle along the lonely dirt road and scanned the rolling white countryside. He was working North Branch Township near the Wyoming County line. Several large bears had been sighted in the area, and there was a good tracking snow. Dick expected some serious hunting pressure today.

As the road entered Bradford County, Dick headed toward a cross-road to turn back, but then spotted two hunters, each dragging a small bear. He stopped his vehicle and waited until the hunters, a father and his

teenage son, reached the road. Both bears were male cubs weighing about 70 pounds, and although the bears were legal, something about the hunters didn't set right with the deputy. Both hunters seemed edgy. Dick couldn't pinpoint why, but 20 years in the field told him something was wrong. He decided to take their names and hunting license numbers, just in case something turned up.

After the hunters left, Dick began backtracking their trail. They had dragged their bears parallel to the road for hundreds of yards through dense forest and swampland, and although they eventually came out of the woods near their vehicle, Dick wondered why they hadn't traveled in a direct line through open fields to the road, saving them a lot of time and arduous labor. The only logical reason, he figured, was because they didn't want to be seen.

Within minutes Dick met several hunters walking toward him from the woods. They had found a dead cub shot and left behind. Suspecting the father and son, Dick radioed for additional officers to assist with an investigation. Deputy Mary Lu Shaffer was first to respond. She was at the scene when I arrived, along with Waterways Conservation Officer



Bill Wasserman recently published a new book, *Pennsylvania Wildlife Tails, A Game Warden's Notebook*. A prolific writer, many *Game News* readers no doubt remember the "Looking Back" column Bill wrote for *Game News* in 1993 and the other stories he has penned (*The Killers, Graveyard Shift*, etc.) about his experiences as a WCO. Bill's new book contains 48 tales about people and animals, each illustrated by Dana Twig of Sayre. Featured in this softcover, 104 page book are some of the funniest and most amazing anecdotes Bill has experienced in the more than 40 years that he has been associated with Pennsylvania wildlife.

Pennsylvania Wildlife Tails can be ordered from Penn's Woods Publications, 25 Dogwood Drive, Tunkhannock, PA 18657. The price is \$8.95 (PA residents add 6 percent sales tax) plus \$1.83 for shipping. Visa/MasterCard call 570/836-2052.

Larry Bundy. Much of what had happened was already clear in Deputy Shaffer's mind.

A bear cub, a female, its black fur vivid in the white snow, lay dead. It weighed perhaps 45 pounds, the smallest of the three cubs. Her two siblings had been killed nearby and dragged away. Human footprints, bear tracks and blood trails in the snow told all we needed to know. After killing all three cubs the two poachers left her behind, taking the larger cubs with them.

Mary Lu found tissue from one of the cubs the poachers had taken, and bagged it for DNA analysis, while Larry Bundy picked up a small piece of fur left from the second cub and saved it for evidence. The crime lab could match these items to the cubs if we found them. After photographing the scene and collecting the female cub, we followed the poachers' tracks. Their zigzagging course eventually led us to the exact spot where Dick had met the father and his teenage son earlier. There

was now no doubt that the deputy's hunch had paid off.

Game Commission dispatchers traced the hunting license numbers Deputy Zika had procured and came up with an address. Because they lived in Sullivan County, I made radio contact with WCO Scott Lorow. He knew the men, so we decided to meet in Dushore and follow him to their residence.

While we were waiting for Scott in a convenience store parking lot a woman approached me to voice her dismay over the shooting of cubs. I explained that although the particular cub I had on my game rack was quite small, some cubs weigh 100 pounds or more. It's also difficult to tell a bear's size in the wild, I said. Small cubs without an adult nearby often appear to be much larger.

WCO Lorow soon pulled into the lot. His deputies, along with Bradford County WCO Edward Gallew, were waiting for us at the poacher's residence.

When we arrived, two large bear cubs lay in the bed of a pickup parked in the driveway. The poacher was home and invited Officer Bundy and me inside. I explained to him what we had. The poacher's son, all of 15, sat by the woodstove as I explained their options. With no desire for a court hearing, the father admitted firing eight shots, wounding all three bears. Two died from his shots; his son finished off the third.

The father paid \$800 in fines and lost his hunting and trapping privileges for three years. But what disturbed me most about the incident was that a father taught his son not only a flagrant disregard for the Game and Wildlife Code, but for animal life as well. To me, the enormity of this transgression surpasses the bounds of all conceivable laws. □

Pen-raised Wild Turkeys, Don't Release Them

By Bob Eriksen
NWTF Regional Biologist

UNTIL THE 1970s, many wildlife agencies experimented with the use of pen-reared wild turkeys as a method of restoring wild turkey populations to areas from which the birds had disappeared. Between 1940 and 1970, more than 125,000 pen-reared wild turkeys were raised and released in the U.S. Most were released in the 15 states from which eastern wild turkeys had disappeared. In time, wildlife managers learned an important lesson: Truly wild turkeys cannot be raised in captivity. Studies have shown that releasing pen-reared turkeys, whether as poults or adults, is not a way to establish wild populations of these fine birds.

Fortunately, also during that 30-year period, improved live-capture techniques were developed, making it feasible to move appreciable numbers of wild turkeys from places where they were abundant to suitable but unoccupied range. Thanks to these trap and transfer operations, wild turkey populations have been restored over much of their former range, in many instances beyond what anybody would have ever expected.

However, there are still areas where wild turkeys are not abundant, or where wild turkey enthusiasts wish the birds were more numerous. Occasionally, people interested in bolstering turkey numbers where they live or hunt purchase "wild turkeys" from game bird breeders. Many of the birds advertised as eastern wild turkeys by

game breeders are not truly eastern wild turkeys. Rather, the birds are the result of selectively breeding wild and domestic turkeys to look like eastern wild turkeys. While the birds resemble wild turkeys, both their genetic and behavioral attributes are quite different. Because most pen-reared wild turkeys are crosses, they are not adapted to living in the wild. In addition, even truly wild turkeys, when raised in captivity, don't learn the behaviors turkeys acquire from their mothers. No matter the stock, pen-reared turkeys, when released, are more susceptible to predation, less likely to breed successfully, and are far more likely to exhibit tame or even aggressive behavior toward humans. None of these behavioral traits are desirable.

Once released, pen-reared turkeys often become a problem. Often, the birds spend their time near homes or in neighborhoods, roosting on roofs, sheds and fences. Pen-reared turkeys have been known to scratch the paint on expensive cars, block traffic, dust in flower boxes and raid vegetable gardens. Residents complain about droppings, tame behavior and even attacks by the captive-reared birds. Some people in the neighborhood enjoy the birds and encourage them by feeding. Others are troubled by the tame turkeys and request the Game Commission to remove them. Removing problem turkeys is costly, time consuming and creates hard feelings.

Releasing pen-reared turkeys can also threaten wild turkey flocks. The greatest threat is the potential for introducing diseases or parasites to wild flocks. Pen-reared turkeys are often raised with other game

birds or domestic fowl. Exotic game birds and domestic fowl can carry diseases and parasites that are lethal to turkeys. In captivity, the maladies are held in check by medication added to food and water. After release, however, when the birds are no longer being medicated, the diseases or parasites can prosper. If the pen-reared turkeys come into contact with wild birds, the disease or parasite may be transmitted.

Should captive birds survive long enough to reproduce, their genetic background could have a negative impact on the wild turkey gene pool. DNA analysis has shown that pen-reared turkeys often differ genetically from true eastern wild turkeys, because they are crosses with subspecies of turkeys from other geographic regions. Not only does this genetic diversity make the pen-reared birds poorly adapted for survival, introducing these genes to wild populations could make the entire wild turkey population less viable.

Many states and provinces prohibit the release of pen-reared wild turkeys. Still other states and provinces prohibit the possession of the birds or their eggs. The Pennsylvania Game Commission allows people to possess pen-reared wild turkeys, but does not allow the release of the birds without a permit. There are some good reasons to allow possession of pen-reared wild turkeys — they are excellent table fare, and they're good for educational exhibits (they look like wild turkeys, but adapt better to life in a pen than wild turkeys). Many people keep pen-reared turkeys simply as pets; they are colorful and fascinating to watch. Turkey hunters often keep pen-reared turkeys so that they can study the birds' vocabulary and practice their calling techniques. Our advice is this: enjoy pen-reared wild turkeys, but keep them confined. Advise others not to release pen-reared turkeys under any circumstances. You are not doing the birds, their wild counterparts, or hunting and hunters any service by releasing them into the wild.

Pennsylvania has had tremendous suc-



Pennsylvania's turkey trap and transfer program has been a huge success. Just ask CODY WHIPPLE, Lawrenceville, who took this mature tom on a state game lands in Tioga County last spring.

cess with its turkey trap and transfer program. Hunter report cards from the 2002 spring gobbler season indicate a preliminary harvest of 44,500 bearded turkeys. If this estimate holds true, 2002 will be the second year Pennsylvania has seen a spring turkey harvest of more than 40,000 birds. This comes as no surprise, because the statewide turkey population is healthy and has increased from a low of 3,000 birds in the early 1900s to more than 320,000 today.

The fall 2001 harvest was 48,008 birds, and surpassed the 2000 harvest (44,865) as the second highest fall harvest. The record was set in 1995, when 49,748 turkeys were taken. This is the fourth year we have harvested more than 40,000 turkeys in the fall. With success such as this, there's no reason to jeopardize what we've accomplished by releasing pen-reared turkeys. □

Enhancing Herbaceous Openings

Planning for the Future In Pennsylvania's Elk Range

By Jon Marc DeBerti

PGC Wildlife Biologist Aide

THE GAME COMMISSION and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) have developed a 7-year habitat enhancement plan for the elk range. The elk range is approximately 835 square miles, and about 67 percent public lands (state forest, state parks and state game lands), most of which is heavily forested. Currently, approximately 1,200 acres are high quality herbaceous openings. Habitat enhancements will focus on development of these herbaceous openings.

Sometimes referred to as food plots or wildlife openings, herbaceous openings are places where annual plants, grasses and legumes are the predominant plant species. Herbaceous openings are sometimes manmade, such as agricultural fields, food plots, utility rights-of-way, reclaimed strip mines and even some clearcuts. Natural openings occur in river bottoms and burned areas, and natural meadows. Historically, most elk/human conflicts have occurred when elk enter openings in agricultural and residential areas. The new habitat enhancements planned on public lands should help to minimize conflicts.

Larissa Rose



Game Commission Wildlife Biologist Aide JON DeBERTI checks out some of the grasses that have come up in a new herbaceous opening. This food plot was planted in the spring of 2002.

Importance of Herbaceous Openings to Elk and Other Wildlife

Through decades of observation and radio telemetry work on more than 200 elk, biologists have learned that elk spend the majority of time foraging in herbaceous openings, and that their movements are influenced by the location, quality and quantity of

these openings. We have learned that elk use larger openings (8+ acres) more often than smaller ones. Also, in early spring and late fall elk prefer plots seeded with orchard grass, timothy and winter wheat. These plants are referred to as cool season grasses, because they grow better and are more productive in cooler temperatures. During summer and early fall, elk use plants such as clovers and trefoils, which grow better in warmer weather. Grasses are important forage for elk, and during the winter months, when grasses are dormant, elk will still paw through snow to get at grass. They will also browse and bark saplings of red and striped maple and witch hazel.

Turkeys, deer, bears, small mammals, grassland songbirds, grasshoppers and many other species also benefit from these openings. Turkeys bring poults to herbaceous openings to feed on grasshoppers during the summer. Deer and bears feed on the grasses, snakes use the sites for basking, and grassland songbirds use them for nesting and to find insects. Another benefit of these herbaceous openings is that they will relieve some of the deer-browsing pressure on the surrounding forests.

Principles Behind the Plan

This habitat plan is designed to create a complex of wildlife openings on public lands in key locations to attract and hold elk. A complex is an 8- to 12-square-mile area that contains 40 to 80 acres of high quality herbaceous openings, with some sapling stage

hardwood forest to supplement winter forage and conifer stands for thermal cover. An example of a long standing complex is Bear Hollow (Figure 1). The Bear Hollow complex is an 8-square-mile area that contains about 55 acres of high quality herbaceous openings. From radio telemetry data, we know that the 60 to 90 elk that live in this area spend most of their time within the boundaries of the complex moving from one opening to another. We have taken this complex approach and applied it over the entire elk range (Figure 2). Over the next seven years we're hoping to create about 1,100 acres of new herbaceous openings to supplement the 1,200 currently managed acres. Most of the openings will be in the expanded elk range, in the Moshannon, Sproul and Elk state forests and SGLs 100, 321 and 34.

The 80-plus sites chosen are failed clearcuts or utility rights-of-way. Many timber sales from the 1970s and '80s have not regenerated because of over-

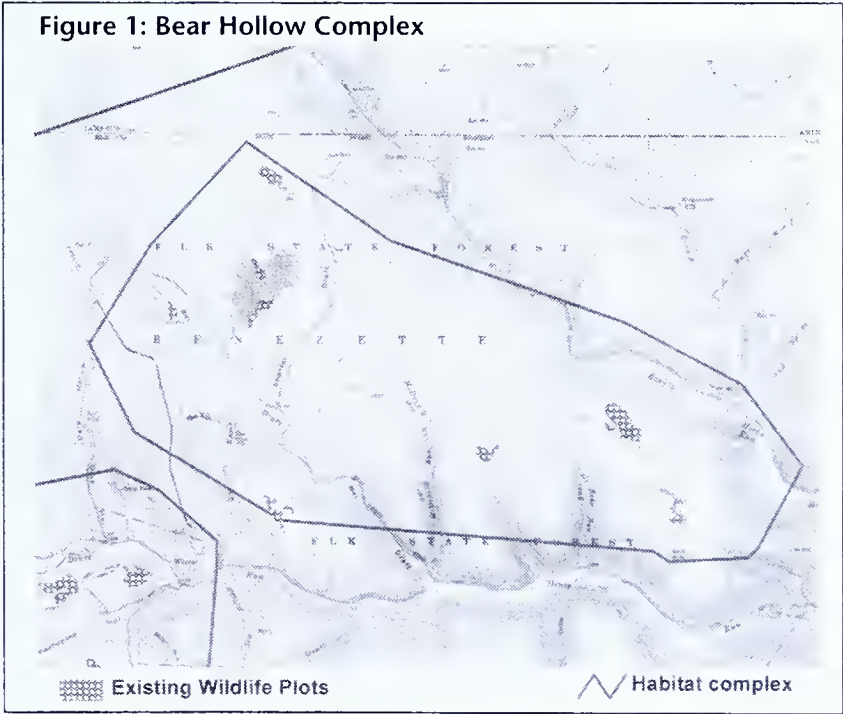
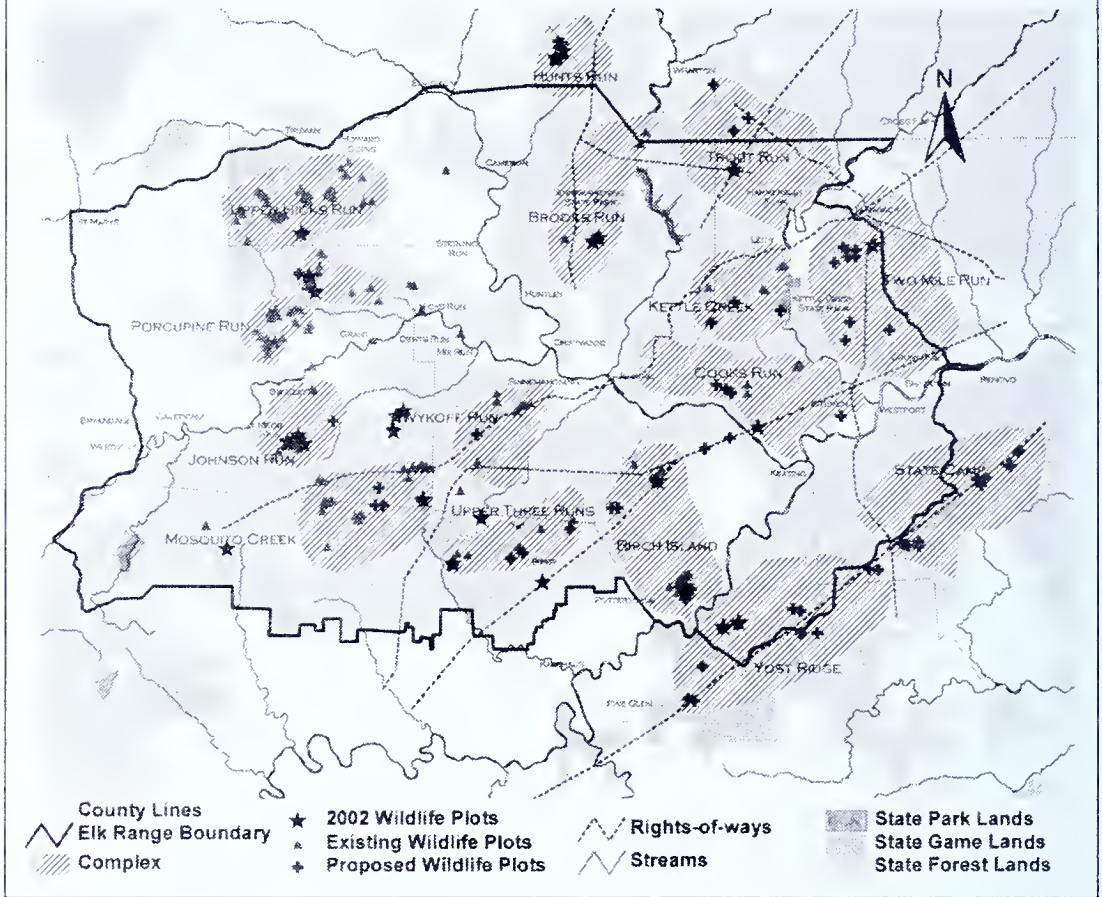


Figure 2: Wildlife Complexes within the Elk Range



browsing by deer. Sweet fern and hay-scented ferns are the main species growing on these sites, and because these plants are of little value to wildlife, the sites have become biological deserts of sorts. Planting these sites in clovers, trefoils and grasses will greatly improve their productivity for many species of wildlife. Utility rights-of-way serve as foraging sites for elk as well as travel corridors from one complex to another, and help disperse elk throughout the range.

Enhancement of the Opening

Even though the sites are generally open, a lot of work is needed to create a productive herbaceous opening. This is where the PGC Food and Cover crews and Bureau of Forestry (BOF is a division of DCNR) workers

perform their magic. Unfortunately, we are not working in deep fertile soils like those in farm country. Our soils are usually very rocky, acidic and nutrient deficient. Simply stated, enhancing an opening is generally a 3-step process that involves site preparation, adding soil amendments and then planting.

Site preparation involves clearing shrubs and small trees from the site with a dozer, turning up the soil with a disc weighing several tons, and removing rocks. Often, the Department of Corrections, through their Community Work Program, provides inmates from the Quehanna Boot Camp to help. If present, fruit producing trees and clumps of trees are left to create additional habitat and food for wildlife.

The second step requires testing the soil to determine the proper amounts of lime and fertilizer, and then applying them. Ini-

tially, most sites require about three tons of lime per acre, with additional liming the following year because of the high acidity of the soils.

The final step is planting the sites in clovers, grasses and trefoils. In most cases, an annual nurse crop of winter wheat, oats or buckwheat is planted with the other seed mixture to stabilize and condition the soils and provide quick ground cover.

A goal of the project is to maintain these sites longer before having to reseed. Openings will be mowed annually, which will increase their productiveness and disperse seeds produced by the grasses and clovers. This is the most cost-effective way to maintain openings. We will top dress, lime and fertilize the plots every couple of years or as needed. Mowing and top dressing are the simplest way for us to maintain and increase the productivity and longevity of the plots.

Funding

Funding for the habitat plan is derived from the Elk Challenge Grant created by the PGC and DCNR. Both agencies have allocated \$100,000 a year for three years. PGC monies are coming from the first 10,000 elk hunting license applications. The "challenge" is for private organizations and individuals to match the PGC and DCNR funds. For example, if \$5,000 is given from a group, the PGC and DCNR will each contribute \$2,500. In effect, we'll be able to create twice as many acres from the same contribution. It's a pretty good deal.

The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation



Larissa Rose

THE FIRST STEP in creating a herbaceous opening is site preparation. Here, a bulldozer is used to clear shrubs from an area that will eventually contain more than 30 acres of clovers, trefoils and grasses for many species of wildlife.

has agreed to spearhead the fund-raising efforts. Last year, the first year of the challenge grant, we had \$188,226 available to enhance openings. The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, National Wild Turkey Federation, Dominion Resources, Pennsylvania Wildlife Habitat Unlimited, Safari Club International Lehigh Valley Chapter and Sinnamahoning Sportsmen's Association contributed a total of \$94,113, which was matched by the state agencies.

By this fall, PGC Food and Cover crews and BOF maintenance workers will have enhanced 25 new sites totaling about 230 acres. This is above and beyond the current 1,200 acres planted, mowed, limed, and/or fertilized every year within the elk range. A special thanks to the habitat partners and all PGC and DCNR employees for all the hard work and effort that was put forth this year. I would also like to thank the sportsmen and women of Pennsylvania for their continued support. If you are interested in helping us reach our funding goal, please contact the PGC. □



The Dream Bear

By Jim Comp

THE 1998 BEAR SEASON was one to remember. My youngest son Mark, after serving 8½ years in the Marines, had just gotten discharged. He had not done any hunting for 12 years and really missed it. One day we were sitting around talking and Mark said he'd like to go along with me, another son, Craig, and a friend, Ken, who go bear hunting every year. He bought all of his equipment, sighted in his rifle, and our plans were set. We would leave home in Perry County about 3 a.m., drive up to Tioga County to hunt all day, and then drive home — everyone except Mark had to work on Tuesday.

About a week before opening day Mark started dreaming about bear hunting. I guess he had two or three

dreams that week, and in one he killed a bear. By the time the night before the season arrived, he was wound tighter than a clock.

We took two vehicles, in case of a problem, and were on the road by 3 a.m. We stopped for coffee and donuts, and arrived at the mountain where we hunt around 5:45. I don't like going into the woods while it's dark, so at first light we started out. Craig headed up one mountain, while Mark, Ken and I headed up to the point of an adjacent mountain. A real ordeal, as climbing up takes more than an hour.

Ken likes to hunt about two-thirds of the way up, and he left us for his stand while Mark and I continued on to the top. I hunt a laurel covered bench on top that goes around a point and continues along the north side of the mountain. Just as we

got to the top and through a patch of laurel we noticed a depression in the leaves and some broken saplings where a bear had obviously bedded down. A big tree nearby had claw marks all over it, and the area was littered with bear droppings. About 250 yards from the spot is a huge rock where I often stand, as it gives me a good view into the laurel. I told Mark he could pick a stand to the west of my rock, or just stay here near the point. Mark decided to stay near the point for a few hours and then work his way up to my rock.

When I reached the big rock I changed into some dry clothes, and by 7:30 was settled in for the day. An hour hadn't gone by when I heard a crashing sound just to the west and soon saw a bear running into the laurel. I was certain it wasn't going to slow down or stop, so I picked an opening in the laurel and fired when the bear reached it. After the adrenaline rush had subsided I went to the spot. I searched for an hour but found no indications of a hit. Mark showed up and I told him what had happened. If he had gone where I had suggested earlier, the bear would have passed right by him. The rest of the day was uneventful, and we headed off the mountain for another year. Back at the trucks we compared notes and then headed for home.

When I told everyone at work the next day about my bear hunting adventure, I became overwhelmed with a feeling that something good was going to happen if we went back to our spot to hunt again. I made arrangements to take off work the next day, the last day of bear season. When I got home I told Mark we were going hunting in the morning. He was ecstatic. Craig could get off, too, but Ken had to work.

At 3 a.m. we were again heading north. We arrived and headed up the mountain, except for Craig, who decided to again hunt on another mountain. When we reached the top I stopped off at my rock

and sent Mark on to the west where the bear had gone on Monday.

After changing clothes I settled in again, this time full of optimism. A couple of hours later I had just finished a sandwich and some chocolate chip cookies when a shot rang out to the west; I figured it had to be Mark. A few minutes later another shot rang out. After waiting a few minutes, I packed up my gear and headed over to Mark. After wading through some laurel I saw him standing beside his trophy. It was a beautiful sight.

After tagging, taking photos, field-dressing and story telling, we began planning for the huge task of getting the bear out. I pointed out to Mark a couple of trees 50 yards up the bench where I had killed my first bear, in 1988. Mark's bear was bigger than mine, and it had a heavy coat with the classic white V on the chest. We decided to pole it out with a large dead tree branch.

It was 10 a.m. when we started off the mountain. We could hardly get the bear off the ground, and we didn't get far until the pole broke. We didn't want to ruin the hide, but decided we had no choice but to drag the bear out. We were a mile from the truck and it was downhill for about 300 yards and then along the side of the mountain the rest of the way. We took turns dragging and finally got to the truck about 3:15.

Craig arrived a short time later (missing out on all the work) with a surprised look on his face. After loading the bear we went to a check station before heading back to Perry County. The bear weighed 200 pounds field-dressed, and Mark now has a gorgeous 6-foot bear skin rug on the wall. Who says dreams don't come true? □

Tis the



ARNOLD J. MOSA JR., Irwin, got this hen turkey at 20 yards with his bow last fall.



Three generations of **GARNERS** got these bucks in Franklin County. From L to R: **TOM**, 9-point, **MARK**, 10-point, and **DERRICK**, 9-point.



BOB THOMAS, Glassboro, NJ, got this 7-point with a 20-inch spread in Tioga County last year.



RON RODE, Halifax, stayed home in Dauphin County to bag this big 8-point.



These Fulton County bucks were taken by three generations of the **HESS** family. L to R: **BRIAN**, 4-point, **DENNIS**, 8-point, and **IVAN**, 9-point.

Season



These Pike County bears were taken during the 2000 season by three generations of the MOORE family. L to R: ELLIOTT JR., 99-pounder, ELLIOTT SR., 333-pounder, and STEPHEN, 198-pound bruin. FRANK STOCK, Churchville, right, got this 4x4 bull during the first elk hunt in Pennsylvania in 70 years last year.



14-year-old MARTIN SERENE, Waterford, above, got this piebald doe during the early season last year. WILLIAM WEIKERT, York, middle right, got his 10-point in Huntingdon County.



Four opening day bucks for the ERDELYS. L to R: MIKE, Charleroi, 8-point with 20-inch spread, AARON, Charleroi, 8-point, TIM, Perryopolis, 10-point with a 19-inch spread, and ROB, Perryopolis, 6-point. All four deer were taken in Fayette County.



STAN DUBOWSKI, Erie, bagged this 205-pound bruin in Warren County. **JEFF GETTYS**, below, got this turkey in Sullivan County.



WENDY RAMBERT-HEATLEY, Trout Run, got her first deer — this 4-point — in Tioga County last year.



L to R: JASON, PAUL and SARAH RHINE, Blooming Grove, above, stayed in Pike County to bag these three deer. **JIMMY GRIFFIN**, Greenfield Township, left, got this 200-pound 10-point with a 22-inch spread in Potter County on last year's opener. The deer took third place in the Potter County Big Buck Contest. Way to go, Jimmy!



When is the Rut?

Christopher S. Rosenberry, PhD, Wildlife Biometrician
Bret D. Wallingford, Wildlife Biologist

AS SUMMER gives way to autumn, white-tailed deer begin preparing for the breeding season. Bucks begin sparring and testing themselves against each other, and they begin scent marking by rubbing trees and creating scrapes. All of this is in preparation for the rut, when their stamina and dominance will be tested and they have a chance to pass their genes on to future generations of deer.

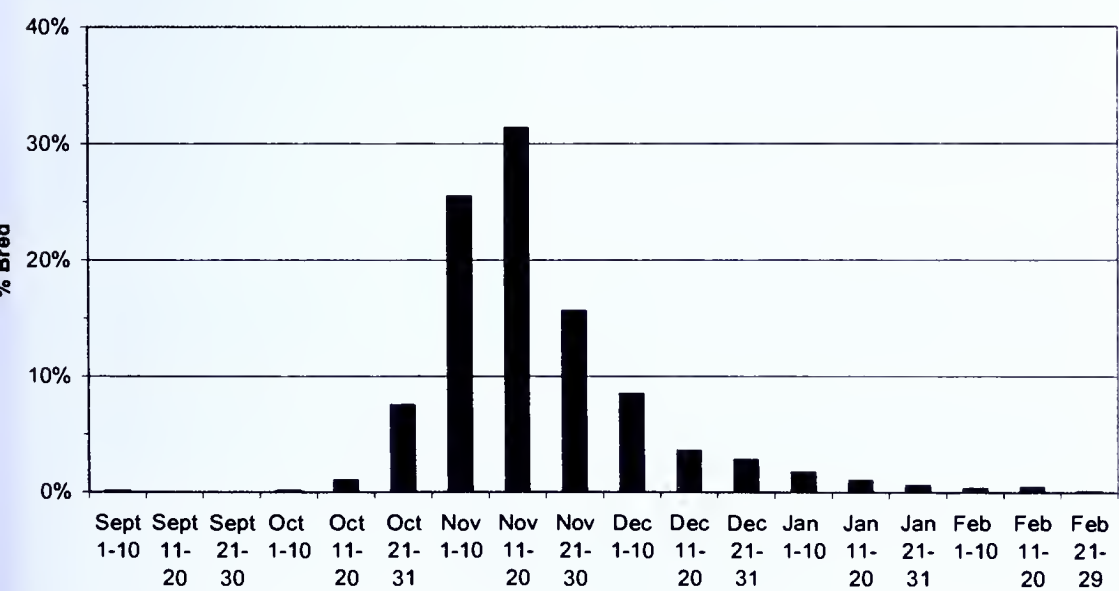
Historically, every year hunters have harvested approximately 75 percent of all bucks in Pennsylvania, and about 80-85 percent of the buck harvest has been yearlings. Because of the large difference between the harvest rates of bucks and does, there was concern that buck:doe ratios may be skewed enough to disrupt breeding.

Ideally, the vast majority of does should be bred during a short period each autumn. A short, properly timed breeding season

provides a “flooding” effect when fawns are born the following spring. Having most fawns born over a short time reduces the effects of predation, because a large number of fawns are available. Most fawns quickly grow past their most vulnerable time of life before predators can have a high impact on the age class. A properly timed breeding season also results in fawns being born during warm weather and, in turn, gives fawns the optimum amount of time to grow before the upcoming winter.

But if, during the breeding season, there are not enough bucks, unbred does will repeat their monthly estrous cycles until they are bred. In this case, the fawning season is spread out from June into July, August and even longer. This increases the risk of predation, because young, vulnerable fawns are

Figure 1. Peak Of Rut



available over a long period of time. Also, fawns born late in the season have less time to grow and put on fat for winter.

When do deer in Pennsylvania breed, how long is the rut, and are there enough bucks to get does bred on time? To answer these questions, Game Commission personnel began collecting breeding date information from roadkilled does from February through May in 2000 and 2001. We determined the timing of the rut by measuring fetus length, which told us how old the fetus was, and then it was a matter of simply back-dating to find out when conception took place.

In addition, we can estimate when birth would have taken place if the doe had carried the fawn through to full term. Nearly 2,000 does were examined, allowing us to measure the breeding season in the fall of 1999 and 2000.

Overall, the rut ran from September into February, but 9 out of 10 does were bred from mid-October to mid-December. The peak of the rut occurred in mid-November (Figure 1). This peak in breeding resulted in a peak fawning time of late May to early June. The gestation period (time from breeding to birth) of deer is about 200 days.

Compared to adult does, female fawns were bred later. Peak breeding by fawns occurred in late November and early December, and nearly half of all fawn breeding occurred from December to February. Fawn breeding probably explains some breeding activity observed by hunters during the firearms season after Thanksgiving.

Overall, one of every four female

Table 1: Productivity of does in Pennsylvania, 1999-2000. Percentage of pregnant does carrying a single fawn, twins, and triplets by age of doe.

	Single	Twins	Triplets
Fawn Does	83%	17%	<1%
Adult Does	27%	70%	3%

fawns was pregnant, while nine out 10 adult does were pregnant. Fawns generally had single fawns and adult does usually had twins. Triplets were rare (Table 1).

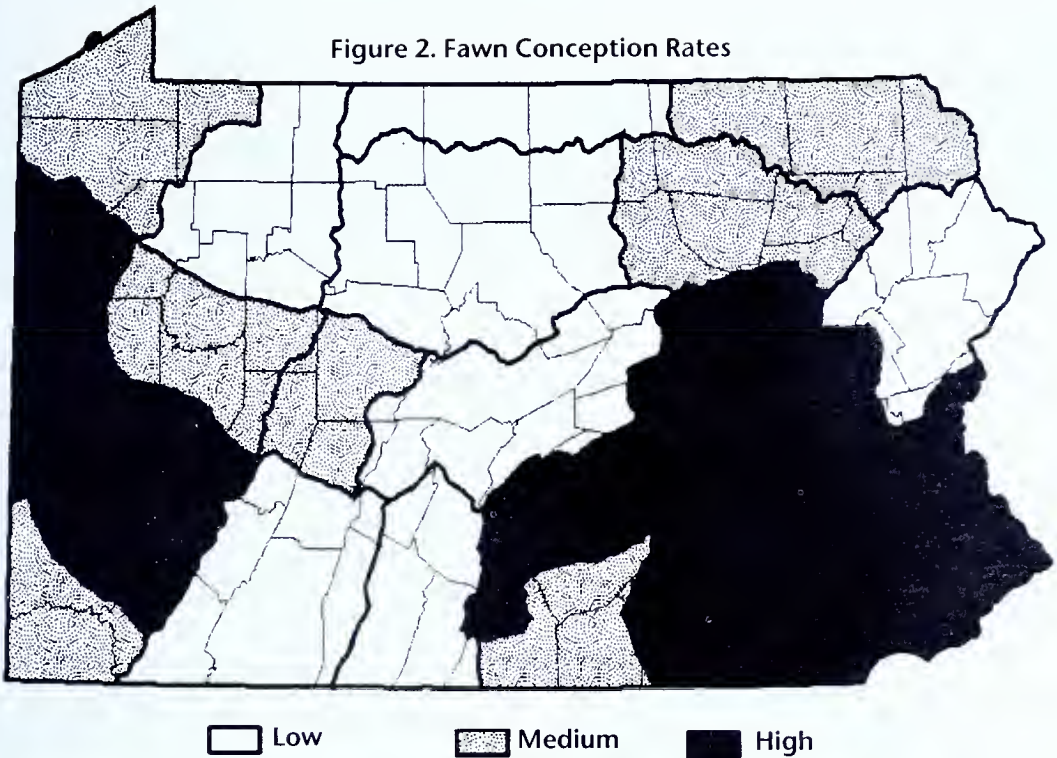
From these results, we can conclude that Pennsylvania's deer population contains enough bucks to breed does in a relatively short time period. Most adult does are being bred around November, with fawn breeding extending through December into February.

Late breeding by fawns may not be indicative of lack of bucks. Rather, it may be related to maturation of fawns, whereby they don't become sexually mature until late November. Sexual maturity in fawns is related to body size, which is affected by quality and quantity of food as well as birth date. Consequently, fawns in the most productive areas of Pennsylvania may reach sexual maturity and become pregnant (Figure 2). Fawns in other areas with poorer nutrition may not reach sexual maturity until the following year, when they are a year and a half old.

Because of the high harvest rate of bucks in Pennsylvania, most breeding has been done by yearling bucks, those in their first breeding season. Throughout the evolution of the whitetail, this has not been the normal situation. In a more natural situation, white-tailed bucks determined breeding privilege based on size and strength. Extremely high buck harvest rates modified this in the last 100 years.

Older bucks play a very important role in the social order of deer. They are the governors of the male side of the population, and typically do most of the breed-

Figure 2. Fawn Conception Rates



ing. Older bucks provide greater social stability during the breeding season, with yearling bucks participating less in the breeding. Reduced breeding activity allows yearlings to keep more of the body fat and weight they accumulated over the summer and fall, which can become critical during the winter.

Because of the breeding ecology of deer, increasing male competition for mating is desirable in Pennsylvania. This increased competition will force bucks to determine which animals will breed based on their physical fitness. Clearly, antler restrictions will increase competition for male breed-

ing by moving more bucks into the older age classes. This will create a more normal breeding ecology than we had when the male yearling mortality rate was much higher. The presence of more older bucks can alter breeding activities and characteristics of a deer population. But will any changes be found after the new antler restrictions allow more bucks to reach the 2-year-old age class? To answer this question we will continue collecting conception data from roadkilled does as the deer population is modified by the new antler restrictions. □

COVER PAINTING BY SUSAN BANKEY YODER

MR. COTTONTAIL — alias rabbit, bunny and powderpuff — is an adaptable critter, thriving in farming areas, suburban backyards, roadsides, just about anywhere it can find a little cover. This month's cover — "The Homesteader" — is the 2003 Working Together for Wildlife fine art print. As in past years, a limited edition of 600 prints is available. Prints are on acid-free paper, image is 15 x 22½ inches. Cost is \$125, plus \$7.50 s&h (for framing add \$97.50, plus \$15 s&h). PA residents add 6% state sales tax. Embroidered patches featuring a cottontail rabbit will be available soon, for \$4.71 each plus tax. The WTFW program was launched in 1979 to provide a way for nonhunters — and hunters, too — to contribute to the management of birds and mammals known collectively as nongame.



OBB was awakened by the resonant chug of a motor and crunching gravel at the end of his drive.

A small figure

in a blaze orange coat ran

past the window, head down against the chill November rain, placed a plastic wrapped newspaper on the threshold, and dashed by again.

Four o'clock. Cobb rose and watched the taillights of the patchworked truck dip over the hill. He retrieved the paper, went to the kitchen, and made some coffee. He couldn't remember a time in the 21 years they had lived up here in the woods when Skip Yoder had failed to deliver a paper. Whenever it rained or snowed he always delivered to the doorstep instead of putting it in the box out on the road. Now, his two boys helped out on the long route.

The Yoders were a large clan, and like those families from an older time, each and every one worked some odd job or another as soon as they were able. They were not prosperous — no one in this rural community was — but made their way by supporting each other, and survived through collective effort.

In recent years, most of them had moved on. Skip had worked at a cousin's garage, but when that closed he split his time between part-time jobs. Cobb imagined that with the boys and two younger girls at home it was a struggle.

Whenever Skip came to collect for the paper, Cobb would try to strike up a conversation with him, but like most of the Yoders, Skip was shy and spoke little. Cobb knew Skip was a hunter, but not even a mention of acorn crops or deer or the size of turkey poults could get him going. Cobb hadn't spoken to Skip for months, ever since the newspaper company began to bill by mail instead of having carriers collect.

The rain eased to a drizzle. Cobb went out to his shop where he kept his hunting gear and got dressed. It was the last day of turkey season, and on his way out he walked past several birdfeeders he was making for Suse, his wife.

He smiled at the light manner of this work. Cobb was a master furniture maker and widely noted for his skill. He specialized in reproductions of 18th century furniture. Windsor chairs for fine colonial estates, blanket chests for a gallery in Lancaster, important restoration work for discriminating collectors and museums.

At one time he had a shop and showroom in Chester County, but the work all but consumed him, and he and Suse moved north to a lovely rural farmland at the base of the Kittatinny range. After much searching they found this place tucked partway up the mountain near the end of a gravel road. Suse was

Penn's Woods Sketchbook

Anonymous

Bob Sopchick



a birder, and Hawk Mountain wasn't far away. With just the two of them, they really didn't need much, and every fall Cobb declared himself semi-retired and spent most of his time hunting.

Cobb headed up the mountain to a hollow thick with grapevines where turkeys often came to feed. He hunkered down along a windfall and listened. Thanksgiving would be here in several weeks, and only wild turkey would suffice for traditionalists like he and Suse.

He could taste it now; the delicious wild meat complemented by chestnut stuffing and gravy. Suse gathered enough native American chestnuts to make the stuffing. There would be candied yams and pumpkin pie made fresh from her garden. He was getting ahead of himself here, though, thought Cobb. He hadn't heard a bird fly down or a distant cluck or yelp. They just might be dining on store-bought yet.

Cobb cut across the face of the mountain by taking a deer trail through a long, dense reef of laurel above a creek. In the center of the laurel patch was an oval clearing about 30 yards long where he had taken numerous deer over the years. No one came in here because they thought it was solid laurel, and in all the years that he hunted here no one put on a drive. The trick was to get in position very early; come in too late and you would just be pushing deer out.

He stirred from his reverie when two does and a big buck ghosted along the far edge of the clearing. A quilt of fog slid down over the mountain, and at first all he saw were the white markings around muzzles and eyes, the flick of a white tail, and a high, pale rack. He had to look hard to make out the slightly darker shade of gray that were the bodies of the deer.

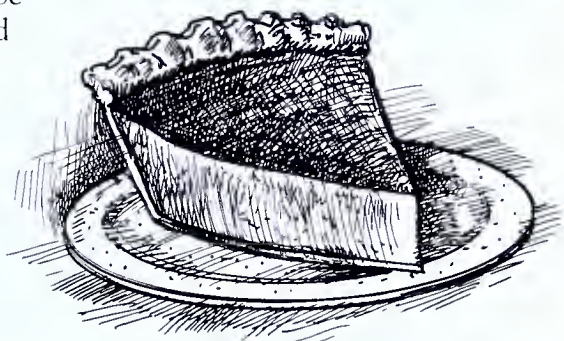
Cobb continued through the laurel to more open woods, out to an outcropping of rock where the sidehill wrapped around. This is where Skip Yoder and his kids posted for deer. Cobb saw them here whenever he dragged a deer up the tram road past their stand. It was a good place to post on the first day, with a commanding view all around.

He recalled how the Yoders walked slowly back and forth and around the boulder, stiff-legged and poker-faced, as if they had been assigned to guard the rock itself. Like elfin sentinels on a miniature castle, one Yoder then another perched on the battlement atop, a single rifle of military vintage among them, carefully changing hands between the young hunters at the precise stroke of the hour.

The drizzle gave way to powdery sheets of snow that quickly gathered in the folds of his coat. Cobb sat under the overhanging rock and watched the somber brown woods brighten, reminding him of Suse sprinkling powdered sugar on walnut breads.

Cobb grew excited when he heard the falsetto piping of turkey voices. The flock was headed his way, and he tucked in tight against the side of the rock and waited, motionless as a bobcat. It was a large flock and feeding in earnest; leafy duff raked back noisily, serpentine necks darting to snatch up the exposed acorns. He would be patient and get a good break on the flock and call them back in.

That was his plan until the pale head of a turkey aligned itself above his silver shotgun bead. Cobb pulled back the hammer on the blackpowder shotgun and took the sure thing. At his shot turkeys erupted everywhere, and he could hear them slap up





through the whippy branches of the canopy, flapping and gliding, plopping down far across the hollow. The woods was intensely quiet, then the urgent kee-kee calls and yelps started from points all around. If the Yoders were here he could call in birds for all of them, he thought.

Cobb was surprised at the size of the gobbler that lay on the tapestry of leaves. At well over 20 pounds, this was the largest gobbler he had ever taken. He slipped and slid up to the crest of the hill, his balance off kilter from the heft of the bird.

COBB READ SUSE'S note on the table. She had driven over to Allentown to settle on her recently deceased uncle's small estate. Cobb plucked the turkey and burned the downy feathers off with a torch, then put the turkey in a tub of water on the porch to soak.

Next, he cleaned his flintlock fowling piece, then removed a flintlock longrifle from the cabinet. It was a magnificent rifle, built by a friend of his who patterned it after an original Lebanon County rifle made by a relative more than two centuries earlier. Cobb had swapped him a Windsor settee for it. Cobb shouldered the rifle and thought of the buck he had seen earlier, of its eight long tines, tall and flat like sabers.

He finished putting the final touches on the birdfeeders and strung a wire across the yard to hang the feeders on. Suse would start feeding the birds on Thanksgiving, after the bears had gone into hibernation. He was fastening the feeders to the wire when Suse pulled in.

"You better call the newspaper," said Suse, peering in at the gobbler in the tub. "Someone killed a pterodactyl."

"That's Thanksgiving dinner," said Cobb.

"That big bird? For just you and me? There weren't any little tender poults in the flock?"

"It was the gobbler's fault," said Cobb. "He lined himself up with my gun barrel and that was it. I bet I can eat that bird by the end of deer season. Hot turkey sandwiches, turkey salad, turkey and biscuits, turkey chili. Bring it on."

"I gave all of Uncle Cal's things to charity, except for this box of photos and two guns rolled up in that sleeping bag," said Suse.

Cobb examined the guns. He recognized the M94 .30-30 rifle with its pistol grip stock and long barrel. For all its age, the gun was in excellent condition. The other was a featherweight Model 70 in .257 Roberts. It was a sweet little gun, and he recalled making the special short stock of highly figured walnut for her uncle who was a small man. Although he was thrilled with Cobb's work, he went back to using his M94 carbine, afraid to scratch the beautiful wood. Cobb put the guns away then walked out and got the mail.

Back inside, he opened the bill from the newspaper company. Under the amount due was a blank line with *Tip for good service* printed beneath. Cobb always added a five dollar tip, but he had a different idea this time.

COBB CALLED THE OUTDOOR columnist of the local paper and told him his plan. "Now let me get this straight," said the writer, "Instead of a tip, you want to give your carriers two rifles."

"That's right," said Cobb. "This family has one gun between the three of them, and I have no use for these rifles. I'm a blackpowder hunter, always will be. If I tried to give the guns to Yoder he wouldn't take them. You know, too proud. But if the newspaper somehow gave the guns to him as a reward for longtime service or bonus, then it would be different. Just so long as I remain anonymous."

"This is great," said the writer. "I'll find a way to get it done."

THE FIRST DAY OF DEER season started with snow that changed to freezing rain. It would be tough going in the woods, and Suse was surprised to see that Cobb was heading out so late. "Don't forget your turkey sandwiches on the counter," she said. "Oh, boy, more turkey," he said, pretending to swallow hard.

COBB GOT TO THE laurel patch an hour later, zigzagging slowly through the dense cover, skirting the clearing inside. When he was almost through to the open woods, he heard two quick shots farther out the mountain.

He took the trail past the big rock where Skip Yoder was showing his boys how to dress out the deer. "Now that's a dandy buck," said Cobb.

Skip looked up and smiled. "They did good."

"I got him with my new rifle," said the red-cheeked youngster. I hit him hard and my brother put him down for keeps with his new gun."

"It's our first deer," said the other boy. But he shot first, so he tags it."

"Now that's teamwork," said Cobb. "Before you start dragging that buck, you're gonna need some energy. How'd you men like a couple of sandwiches?"

The Yoders thanked him, and Cobb continued on.

AS HE WALKED AWAY he reveled in the tone of excitement in their voices, at the bloom of legend as they repeated to each other what each already knew, what each could never forget. Indeed, they had become guardians of that rock, thought Cobb, for now it was a hallowed monument to a brotherly bond.

Cobb walked until he could no longer hear their voices, beyond the cast of the sublime light of gracious anonymity, deep into the graying woods.





FIELD NOTES



Versatile

FAYETTE — William Lucy was working on a boat in the middle of the Monongahela River near Duquesne when a small furry critter swam past. Thinking it was a young beaver or muskrat, he was surprised when a groundhog climbed ashore.

— WCO STEPHEN A. LEIENDECKER, FAIRCHANCE

Bad Example

WARREN — WCO Donald Daugherty, deputies Les Sanford and Ed Fike and I responded to a call about a bear that had its head stuck in a metal milk can. The bruin was a female with cubs, and after tranquilizing her we tried in vain to remove the can. Finally, with the help of some concerned neighbors, we were able to borrow some tools to cut the can from the bear's head. The bear was soon reunited with her cubs and seemed to have that "do as I say, not as I do" look on her face.

— WCO DUSTIN M. STONER, TIDIOUTE

Determined

LYCOMING — One morning I got a call about a bear cub in one of my culvert traps, but after heading to where I had the trap set the dispatcher directed me to another location. Confused, I eventually found the trap in a nearby woods, as it seems the mother bear had moved the trap. I was able to dart Mom and process her and the cub, while three other cubs watched from a nearby tree.

— WCO HAROLD COLE, WILLIAMSPORT

Couldn't Wait

WASHINGTON — I'm finally back after serving for 10 months of active duty with the reserves. A few of my fellow reservists said I was crazy to go back to work right away, but I told them I have the best job in the world.

— WCO DANIEL SITLER, WASHINGTON

Narrow Escape for One

POTTER — I noticed an animal barely miss being hit by a vehicle on Route 44, and as I passed the spot I was amazed to see a young bobcat struggling with a mature gobbler.

— WCO MARK S. FAIR, GALETON



Uh-Oh

LANCASTER — Just before Deputy Greg Graham emerged from a cornfield to check a dove hunter, the man said to his buddies that he had shot a bird but didn't know what it was. They told him they weren't sure what it was but knew it wasn't a dove. Just then Deputy Graham stepped out and said, "State officer, let me identify that bird for you."

— WCO JOHN W. VEYLUPEK, LEBANON

Just Never Know

FOREST — It's always amusing to watch the looks on peoples' faces when they see what I'm carrying on my deer rack. Sometimes it might be a big buck, maybe a bear, or even a small animal in a cage. The strangest looks occurred, however, when I was hauling a newspaper vending machine that someone had dumped on a game lands.

— WCO DANIEL P. SCHMIDT, WEST HICKORY

Hi-Tech

CLINTON — WCO Ken Packard and I had only 24 hours to produce an enlarged photo of the scene of a hunting-related shooting incident for court. Ken made arrangements for a State Police pilot and plane to meet me in Lock Haven, and a short time later I was in the air while Ken positioned his vehicle where the victim's car had come to a stop after he had been shot. After taking the photos, I met Ken near the airport and gave him the film. Ken then took the film to a 1-hour processing lab and brought the negatives back to my office. I made a digital scan of the best neg and printed a large print. Total time elapsed — five hours.

— WCO JOHN WASSERMAN, RENOVO

Best Defense is Good Offense

BUCKS — I noticed a hen turkey that had a brood on SGL 157 launch toward a nearby tree and flush a red-tailed hawk that I hadn't seen. The hawk soon outdistanced the turkey in hot pursuit, but satisfied the threat was gone, the hen soon returned to her young.

— WCO JOHN PAPSON, TRUMBAUERSVILLE

Close Call

CAMERON — I noticed a hen turkey in the Hicks Run area of SGL 14 running back and forth through the underbrush, and then I realized she was trying to protect her poults from a bobcat. Luckily for the brood, the cat spotted me and took off.

— WCO CLINT J. DENIKER, EMPORIUM

Some Things Never Change

PERRY — Completing monthly reports used to be a real chore that required keeping extensive records, aligning forms on an old typewriter, and then relying on "snail mail" to get them to the region office. Now, the forms are done on computer, where data is tabulated, checked for spelling errors and stored, and then transmitted by e-mail. The only part of my monthly reports that I now agonize over is coming up with a good Field Note.

— WCO JIM BROWN, LOYSVILLE



No Problem

DAUPHIN — As a trainee last year on field assignment with WCO Patrick Snickles he tested my "reflex" on a roadkilled deer. The deer had been lying in the sun for some time, and WCO Snickles was amused at my reaction. Recently, I had to pick up a roadkill, and WCO Snickles will be happy to know that my gag reflex still works just fine.

— WCO JASON L. DeCOSKEY, MIDDLETOWN

Home Sweet Home

I was banding ducks at Presque Isle State Park in Erie when I caught a snapping turtle in one of my traps. Before releasing it I noticed it was a small male with such distinct head scars it would be easy to recognize if I caught it again. Two nights later the little snapper was back in the trap again, so I took it to the other end of the park and released it into the choppy waters of Lake Erie. Amazingly, two days later the snapping turtle was back in the trap. The 5-mile swim around the peninsula and back into Thompson Bay didn't deter it one bit.

— CHUCK THOMA, PGC WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST

No Excuse

LACKAWANNA — At a HTE class WCO Daniel Figured was explaining how to use the hunting hours table in the digest when a student asked, "What if my clock is set faster than yours?"

— DEPUTY ROBERT KRUKOVITZ, SCRANTON



No Place Like Home

LACKAWANNA — In July 1990 a 5-year-old nuisance bear that local residents called Bernice was trapped by IES Timothy Conway on River Street in Jessup (just northeast of Scranton) and relocated to SGL 127 in Monroe County. The same bear was captured by WCO Vern Perry in July 1997, on Breaker Street in Jessup, and moved to SGL 36 in Bradford County. I recently captured this bear on Hilltop Street in Jessup. The bear is now 17 years old and in good physical condition.

— WCO DANIEL FIGURED, DUNMORE

Loaded Question

MONTGOMERY — A dispatcher from the Region Office called me on my radio one day and asked if I had any loons in my district? My tongue still hurts from biting it.

— WCO J. CHRISTOPHER HEIL, COLLEGEVILLE

Burstin' With Knowledge

LUZERNE — I was checking hunters on the opening day of dove season when a young man with his father became extremely excited and waved me over. It seems the boy had recently completed his HTE course and couldn't wait to be checked in the field by a real "game warden," so he could show how much he had learned. As I walked away the boy's father said, "You guys must be doing something right. I don't have too many friends who want to be checked by the 'game warden.'"

— WCO DAVID P. ALLEN, MOUNTAINTOP

Won't Take Long

SCHUYLKILL — I received a call about a skunk in trouble in Butler Township. When I arrived at the residence of Mrs. Sarah Umlauf she explained that she keeps a glass milk bottle outside to water her plants, and Mr. Skunk had gotten its head stuck inside. Neighbor Dixie McFadden, however, broke the bottle, but the glass rim stayed around the skunk's neck. The next call I get will probably be from someone who saw a skunk wearing an attractive necklace.

— WCO JOHN DENCHAK, GORDON

Many Thanks

Now that I'm back, I'd like to express my sincere gratitude to the 26th Class, training staff and the agency for their support while I was away at the Mount Warfare Training Center in California, fulfilling my military duty. It's great to be home, back on board, and I'm anxious to complete my training.

— TRAINEE TIMOTHY L. WENRICH, HARRISBURG



Was it Really Happening?

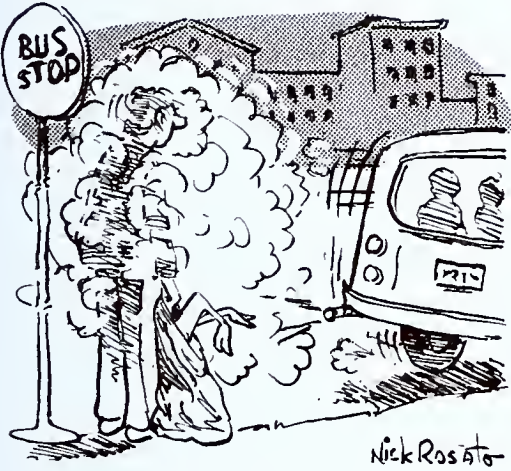
LYCOMING — On the first day of the resident goose season, Deputy Scott Frey and I were checking some hunters set up at the edge of a pond on SGL 252 when I began to sink in the soft mud. I was getting smaller and smaller while my deputy and the hunters were getting taller and taller. It reminded me of a scene in Alice in Wonderland.

— WCO RICK A. DEITERICH, BLOOMSBURG

Good Observation

CHESTER — I was at a picnic with my deputies when my girlfriend commented that all conservation officers must be nosy, because we carry binoculars on the dashboards of our vehicles.

— WCO SCOTT S. FREDERICK, SADBURYVILLE



Thought I Saw Everything

ALLEGHENY — WCO Justin Klugh and I arrived at an address in Pittsburgh where a roadkilled deer had been reported, but we couldn't find it. Finally, a construction worker told us that a man had just placed the deer in a duffle bag and boarded a city bus. After a short pursuit we located the bus which, indeed, had a passenger on board with a dead and smelly fawn. He told us he planned on eating the deer, but didn't know he needed a permit. We explained that he was allowed to possess the deer if he was 18 years or older and a Pennsylvania resident, but that he had 24 hours after picking it up to contact the Game Commission region office to request a permit. We were happy to write him the permit on the spot and left him to catch the next bus — if the driver would let him board.

— WCO GARY M. FUJAK, CORAOPOLIS

New Species?

MONTGOMERY — My daughter Rachael, who is three, is good at identifying animals, and when she saw a program on TV where someone put fake deer antlers on a dog for Christmas she said, "Daddy, a deer dog."

— WCO BILL YROMAN, FREDERICK

Keeping Tabs

I'm amazed by the number of people who keep track of me by reading my Field Notes, and when they don't see one published for a couple of months, they wonder if anything has happened to me. I assure them that I submit Notes each month, but with the amount received, they don't always get published. Several have requested that pages be added to *Game News* to accommodate more Notes, or that I improve my writing style so that more of mine get selected.

— LMO GEORGE J. MILLER, MARIENVILLE

A Little Mixed Up

WYOMING — A landowner told Deputy Jeff Pierce that one morning he looked outside his kitchen window and noticed a fawn following his German shepherds into the barn. Later that day he spotted it again, lying in the grass with the dogs. Eventually the confused deer wandered back into the woods.

— WCO WILLIAM WASSERMAN, TUNKHANNOCK

First Answer

YORK — I was at a sportsmen's club meeting when the topic of ducks and duck hunting came up, so I queried the group to see if anyone knew another common name for the widgeon. You decide which is correct — the baldpate, the ballpeen or the piebald.

— WCO GUY HANSEN, RED LION

Major Excavation

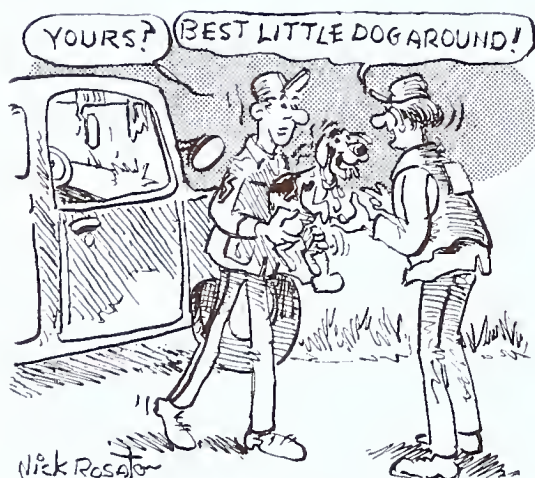
MONROE — Dispatcher Rich Walton asked me to respond to a woman's call about a large hole that had been dug under the foundation of her house. The woman explained that her daughter had heard digging throughout the night under her bedroom, and too frightened to look, they had waited until morning to call. Thinking a woodchuck or a skunk was the culprit, I was surprised to find a 3-foot-wide hole where concrete blocks had been removed. It seems a black bear was getting an early start on a winter den.

— WCO MARK S. RUTKOWSKI, SWIFTWATER

Quite a Difference

After a full day of checking dove hunters, I was beginning to see doves every time I blinked. It was a welcome sight, however, when a bald eagle flew right over my truck and perched in a nearby tree.

— WCO AMY B. GLADFELTER, SOUTHEAST REGION OFFICE



That's Gratitude

SNYDER — I noticed a beagle pup walking along a busy road, so I got out of my vehicle to catch it but it disappeared. When I went to get back in my truck, though, the dog was sitting in the passenger seat. In the 30 minutes it took me to find the owner the pup drank my coffee, chewed the mug, dumped out my files and forms, locked me out of the vehicle (luckily I carry a spare key) and watered my seat.

— WCO HAROLD J. MALEHORN, SELINGSGROVE

Has a Point

GREENE — After noticing tattoos of bucks on two individual's arms at the county fair, I asked why they got tattoos instead of taxidermy mounts. I was told that they are cheaper and easier to clean, and that the trophy goes with its owner wherever he goes to show it off. I asked what happens if you get a larger buck the next year, and was told, "Easy, just go back to the tattoo shop and get a bigger spread and more points added on."

— WCO ROD BURNS, WAYNESBURG

Widespread

WAYNE — On SGL 159 I met wildlife enthusiasts from Romania, Israel, England, Ireland, Canada, Russia and several other countries. They all had the same thing to say: "So many birds and animals." I knew the word had gotten out about our wildlife recreation opportunities, but I had no idea just how far.

— WCO FRANK DOOLEY, TYLER HILL

Brought Back Memories

My wife was driving up our road when she noticed a commotion up ahead, and as she got closer she discovered it was a mother red squirrel trying to get her three little ones off the road. Every time Momma would get one under control, the other two youngsters would take off in different directions. Mary said it reminded her of trying to get three little boys organized to do something.

— LMO JAMES E. DENIKER, SANDY LAKE

Good Idea

LANCASTER — I found out that removing a Cooper's hawk from a small enclosed porch can be challenging no matter how big the net is. It seemed like when I zipped the hawk zagged, and even when I was able to get it in the net, it would find its way out before I could gain control. This humbling experience made me realize that lacrosse should be added to the training school curriculum.

— WCO JONATHAN S. ZUCK, MANHEIM

Off Track

DAUPHIN — I had recently taken a class on how to identify vehicles based on tire tracks left at a crime scene, so I was anxious to apply this knowledge when I was called to assist a neighboring officer on a case. After measuring and examining the tire tracks around an illegally killed bear, I concluded that the suspect's vehicle was a small pickup truck. As it turned out, however, the suspect actually used an 18-wheeler to drop off the carcass.

— WCO MIKE DOHERTY, DAUPHIN

Pennsylvanians score well at YHEC

2002 was another good year for Pennsylvanians at the NRA's Youth Hunter Education Challenge (YHEC), held near Mansfield in July.

Lynsey Arnold, 15, of Ulster was the first recipient of the NRA's new Women on Target Award. The award was established by the Women on Target Program, a component of the Women's Division of the NRA, to help promote shooting sports among women. Arnold, with a score of 1,556, had the highest aggregate score of all young women competing in the 2002 Challenge.

Awards did not stop there for Pennsylvania entries. Ryan Jordan, of Elmira, New York — who participated in the Pennsylvania State YHEC Challenge — was the Junior Division winner in the Cherokee Run event. The run is a timed event involving the traditional skills of knife and tomahawk throwing, shooting with a long bow and using flint and steel to start a fire.

The Pennsylvania Junior Sharpshooters team, coached by Jeff Castle of Troy, placed third overall in the Junior Team Division. Team members were Levi and Louise Castle of Troy, Kole Kramer of Pine Grove, Ryan Jordan of Elmira, and Joe Van Noy of Windfall. The team also took third place in Orienteering, third in Rifle and third in Muzzleloader.

Josh Petris of Mosherville, member of the Pennsylvania Senior Blue Team, took first place in Individual

Muzzleloader and fourth overall in Senior competition.

Devon Babcock, of Rome, took third place in Responsibility Exam, first in Hunter Safety Trail, third in Orienteering, third in Archery, first in Muzzleloader, first in Rifle and Shotgun. All placements were in the Junior Individual where Babcock finished first overall.

The Pennsylvania Troubleshooters, coached by Claude Arnold, took first place in Senior Team Division Rifle. Squad members were Lynsey Arnold, Joshua Easter and Dustin Troutman of Herndon, Kyle Dolan of Mill Hall, and Adam Green of Warren Center.

Dustin Miller of Mill Hall, member of the Keystone State Senior Gold Team, took third place in Individual Division Hunter Safety Trail.

The Pennsylvania Branch Valley Seniors, coached by Bob Strouse, took first place in Senior Team Division Hunter Safety Trail. Team members were Bradley and Justin Freed and Greg Nyce from Perkasio, Mike McMenamin, Jr., Doylestown, and B.J. Strouse, Sellersville. Mike McMenamin took first place in Senior Individual Division Wildlife Identification.

Pennsylvania's Junior Gold Team, coached by Steve Hoelzle Sr., took third place in Team Archery. Members were Alex and Seth Freed and Seth Lange from Perkasio and Steven Hoelzle Jr. and Bradley Landis from Souderton. Landis took first place in

the Individual Responsibility Exam.

The Junior Blue Team, coached by Dave Hafer, took second place in Division Hunter Safety Trail, second in Rifle, and second in Responsibility Exam. Team members were DeForest Burgess, Jeremy Matthews and Daniel Sloat of Sayre, Devon Babcock of Rome and Brain Brosius of Dornsife.

Pennsylvania will again participate in the 2003 event, scheduled in late

July, at the NRA's Whittington Center ranges in Raton, New Mexico. The Game Commission has been an active supporter of YHEC and hosts the State Championships each year at its Scotia Range near State College.

Anyone interested in the Pennsylvania YHEC Program should call Charles Fox, Pennsylvania State YHEC Coordinator, at (570) 297-4642 for information.

Hunters urged to be good sports

THE GAME COMMISSION is encouraging hunters to report game law violations. "The illegal killing or taking of wildlife is not just a violation of hunting ethics of fair chase and sportsmanship; it's also a crime committed against all Pennsylvanians," said PGC Bureau of Law Enforcement director Dave Overcash. "In many cases, the Game Commission would never have been able to successfully prosecute such criminals without the information and help of the public.

"If you care about wildlife and you witness someone breaking the law, please call the Game Commission's region office serving the county where the violation occurred and report the incident. Call as soon as possible, especially if you're afield with a cell phone."

The Game Commission also encourages hunters to participate in its Sportsmen Policing Our Ranks Together program (SPORT), now in its 26th year. SPORT promotes ethical and responsible hunting, and asks hunters to get involved when they witness Game and Wildlife Code violations occurring.

"Most people who break our hunting laws do it knowingly and are challenged only rarely," Overcash explained. "We need to change that, and one of the best ways to accomplish that is through participation in the SPORT program. Remember, those who break the law cheat ethical, law-abiding hunters, show great disrespect to the game they hunt, and often selfishly take more than their fair share."

To report a violator, call the Game Commission region office serving the county where the violation occurred. You also can report a violator via the Internet. To participate, go to www.pgc.state.pa.us, then click on "Hunting Information," scroll down to the bottom of the page and click on "SPORT and TIP programs."

WHITETAILS UNLIMITED is producing and distributing 12- x 12-inch signs, vehicle decals and business cards to promote the PGC's toll-free hotline number for reporting poaching incidents.



Bear Season, Nov. 25-27 & Dec. 2-7

BEAR SEASON this year runs from Monday, November 25, through Wednesday, November 27, and then, in a special new season December 2-7 — concurrent with the first week of regular firearms deer season — in Carbon, Monroe and Pike counties.

Every hunter who gets a bear must within 24 hours take it, along with his hunting license and bear hunting license, to an official Game Commission bear check station.

Check the following list for specific locations. Unless noted otherwise, check stations will be open from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. during the 3-day season. After 9 p.m. on November 27,

hunters with bears that need to be checked should contact the appropriate region office.

Bear hunters must wear a minimum of 250 square inches of fluorescent orange material on the head, chest and back. They must possess a regular hunting license and a bear license to participate in the season. The bear license must be in the hunter's possession while afield, but need not be displayed.

Bear hunters may not use scents or lures. In addition, hunters are reminded they may not hunt in areas where bait or food has been placed within the past 30 days.

Bear check stations — Nov. 25-27

Northwest Region

- Forest County
Marienville Volunteer Fire Company, 106 N. Forest St., (one block west of Route 6) Marienville
- Jefferson County
SGL 244, south from Exit 15, I-80 and just off Rt. 205, Reynoldsville
- Venango County
Northwest Region Office, 1509 Pittsburgh Rd., Franklin
- Warren County
SGL 309, Rt. 127, 2 miles south of Tidioute

Northcentral Region

- Cameron County

Sinnemahoning, Intersection of Rts. 120 & 872

- Centre County
Penn Nursery, Rt. 322 near Pottery Mills
- Clearfield County
S. B. Elliott State Park, Rt. 153 north of I-80, Exit 18
- Clinton County
Renovo Forestry Bldg.
Rt. 120, 2 miles west of Renovo
- Lycoming County
Antes Fort Fire Hall, 1/4-mile south of Northcentral Region Office on Rt. 44; and at Trout Run Fire Hall, Rt. 14.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

- McKean County
SGL 62 Bldg., 3 miles north of Mt. Jewett on Ornsby Rd.
- Tioga County
SGL 208 Bldg., 3 miles north of Gaines on Rt. 349
- Union County
Bald Eagle St. Forest Headquarters
Rt. 45 just west of Rt. 235
Northeast Region
- Bradford County
Monroeton Rod and Gun Club,
(Monday only) off Rt. 220 on
Township Road 402 between
Kellogg and South Branch
- Carbon County
Beltzville State Park Maintenance
Bldg., 2950 Pohopoco Dr., just east
of Exit 34 Pa Turnpike Northeast
Extension
- Luzerne County
Northeast Region Office, Int. of
Rts. 415 & 118, Dallas
- Monroe County
SGL 127 Bldg., Rt. 423, 2 miles
south of Tobyhanna
- Pike County
SGL 180, Shohola Building, Rt. 6

**Open Monday, Tuesday, &
Saturday only,
12:00 noon – 8:00 PM**

- Carbon County
Beltzville State Park Maintenance
Bldg., 2950 Pohopoco Dr., just east
Of exit 74 Pa Turnpike Northeast
Extension (I-476)
- Monroe County
State Game Lands 127 Bldg., Rt.
423, 2 miles south of Tobyhanna
- Pike County
State Game Lands 180 Shohola
Building, Rt. 6 at Shohola Falls,
Approx. 13 miles south of Hawley

- at Shohola Falls, 13 miles south of
Hawley
- Sullivan County
State Forestry Bldg., Rt. 87, 1.5
miles south of Hillsgrove
Southwest Region
- Indiana County
Yellow Creek State Park, off Rt.
422, Indiana
- Westmoreland County
Southwest Region Office, 339 W.
Main St., Ligonier
Southcentral Region
- Fulton County
Buchanan State Forest Bldg, 4
miles east of Breezewood on north
side of U.S. Rt. 30.
- Huntingdon County
Southcentral Region Office, Rt.
22, 1.1 miles west of Huntingdon
Southeast Region
- Berks County
Southeast Region Office, 448
Snyder Rd. 7 miles north of Read-
ing
- Dauphin County
PGC Headquarters, 2001
Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg

**Open Monday-Saturday
10:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.**

- Berks County
Southeast Region Office
448 Snyder Rd., 7 miles north of
Reading
- Luzerne County
Northeast Region Office
Int. of Rts. 415 & 118, Dallas
**Open Monday-Friday
8:00 AM – 4:00PM**
- Huntingdon County
Southcentral Region Office
Rt. 22, 1.1 miles west of Hunting-
don

- Lycoming County
Northcentral Region Office
Rt. 44 south of Jersey Shores

- Venango County
Northwest Region Office
1509 Pittsburgh Rd., Franklin

- Westmoreland county
Southwest Region Office
(New Location) Rt. 711, 7 miles
north of Ligonier or 6 miles south
of New Florence

Bobcat permits drawn for upcoming season

THE GAME COMMISSION, with assistance from several interested observers, drew the names of 545 individuals who will be awarded one bobcat permit each for the upcoming 2002-2003 hunting and trapping season. The drawing was held in the agency's Harrisburg headquarters.

Through a review of the 3,114 applications received, 123 individuals were disqualified for failing to follow instructions, including mailing in multiple applications or bounced checks, leaving 2,991 eligible applicants. In addition to the 545 drawn,

50 other applications were drawn as alternates in case any of the first 545 individuals are declared ineligible during an application review by the Bureau of Law Enforcement.

Those selected received in early October one permit — at no additional charge — to hunt or trap one bobcat. The hunting season will run from October 19 through February 22. The trapping season will run from October 20 through February 22.

The hunting and trapping of bobcats is restricted to Furbearer Management Zones 2 and 3.

Statewide grouse hunting survey

SPORTSMEN, whose primary interest is grouse hunting, were selected and sent a grouse hunting survey to monitor huntable grouse populations through flushes/hour for different hunting periods and geographic regions throughout the state for the 2001-02 hunting season. Replies were received from 447 of 683 cooperators (65 percent) contacted by mail. (To become a grouse survey cooperator, contact Bill Palmer at 333 Sinking Creek Road, Spring Mills, PA 16875.)

The average cooperator hunted 31 hours, flushed 46 birds and bagged slightly more than three grouse. Daily effort was greatest in the early part of

the season, and then dropped off, especially in the northern regions, during December, but, statewide, flushing rates were highest during the mid-December season. Cooperators hunted 11,895 hours and recorded 18,009 flushes for an average rate of 1.51 flushes per hour — up nearly nine percent from the 2000-01 season.

Flushing rates per hour for the six regions during the 2001-02 season were: Northwest, 2.08; Northcentral, 1.84; Southwest, 1.46; Southcentral, 1.22; Northeast, 1.01; and Southeast, 0.94.

— PGC biologist Bill Palmer

Mifflin County man receives maximum penalty in bear case

DAVID VOGT, 45, of Lewistown, Mifflin County, has been sentenced to pay nearly \$800 in fines and \$5,000 in replacement costs for illegally killing a large black bear. He was sentenced on September 6 by District Justice Jackie Leister after Game Commission WCOs and a biologist proved he did not kill the bear in self-defense.

Game Commission WCO Jeff Mock stated that evidence from the scene and testimony from witnesses led him to believe the bear was not killed in self-defense.

"This bear was shot on Vogt's property," Mock said. "But, from all testimony gathered, no one was outside the home when the bear was destroyed. Also, wound track angles proved that the bear was not in an aggressive posture when shot."

PGC biologist Mark Ternent testified that the male, which weighed

630 pounds, would have been expected to weigh more than 700 pounds before denning in mid- to late-November. "Less than one percent of the nearly 45,000 bears weighed in Pennsylvania in the last 20 years obtain that size," Ternent said.

This whole case could have been avoided had the homeowner quit feeding birds when they learned the feeder was attracting bears. An examination of the digestive track showed that the bear was at the birdfeeders for some time before he was shot. There was even partially digested birdseed in its intestines.

Feeding bears is what bird feeding amounts to when bears become frequent visitors, and can cause a variety of problems. This case is a fitting example of why we discourage people from feeding wildlife if bears become habitual visitors.

Antler restrictions reminder

FOR 2002-03, an antlered deer must have 3 points or better on one side in most of the state. In Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Crawford, Erie, Indiana, Lawrence, Mercer, Washington and Westmoreland counties, 4 points or better on one side is required. Excepted are Junior license holders (Senior license holders are not), disabled hunters with a permit to use a vehicle, Pennsylvania residents on active duty in the U.S. Armed Services, and all hunters in the Special Regulations Area counties. See this year's digest for complete details.

CONTACTING THE REGION OFFICES

Northwest — 1-877-877-0299

Southwest — 1-877-877-7137

Northcentral — 1-877-877-7674

Southcentral — 1-877-877-9107

Northeast — 1-877-877-9357

Southeast — 1-877-877-9470

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.



Off the Wire

by Bob D'Angelo

CWD

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission will test 500 hunter-killed deer this fall for chronic wasting disease. The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources plans to test up to 1,000 deer taken by hunters. The disease has not been detected in either state.

Women Bowbenders

While approximately nine percent of all hunters are female, less than one percent of bowhunters are female.

New York

Four young eaglets were brought from Wisconsin late last spring and hatched in Inwood Park in northern Manhattan. The New York City Parks & Recreation Department hopes to continue to release more eagles over the next few years, with the long-term goal of re-establishing a nesting population in the park.

New Hampshire

Hunters took 9,143 deer in 2001 — down 16 percent from the 10,859 taken in 2000. The 2001 harvest included: 1,577 deer taken by bowhunters; muzzleloader hunters, 2,261; and firearm hunters, 5,102. A special youth weekend hunt added another 203 deer.

Michigan

Hunters took 463,706 deer in 2001 — down 14 percent from the 541,701 taken in 2000.

Wisconsin

Despite poorer conditions for waterfowl this year in some western states, especially in the prairies of the north-central U.S. and south-central Canada, populations of locally breeding ducks are doing well, and wildlife officials expect duck hunters to have a good season in Wisconsin this year. Spring aerial surveys revealed a record duck population that was 68 percent above the 2001 estimate, and 118 percent above the long-term average. Mallards increased 127 percent over the 2001 estimate, while blue-winged teal were up 27 percent from 2001 and above the long-term average for the first time in eight years.

Bear Foundation

The North American Bear Foundation (NABF) was incorporated in 1998 at Fort Ripley, Minnesota, and is dedicated to the native bears and other wildlife populations of North America by promoting public awareness, education and sound management of our natural resources and through habitat conservation, restoration and enhancement. The organization supports and promotes the hunting heritage. The NABF will be housed in a brand new educational/visitors center in Minnesota in the near future.

Another View

By Linda Steiner

Many nonhunters just don't understand the necessary role hunters and trappers play in keeping wildlife populations in check. As hunters and trappers we are . . .

At Your Service

"I DON'T know what's wrong with me," a friend said. "I'm constantly sick this year. Guess I'm going to have to see the doctor."

This was from a man usually overbrimming with good health. He had lost a little weight since the first of September and his color wasn't as good as usual, but maybe that was just my "mommy" instincts taking over. He is a schoolteacher, so I teased him about the kids getting to him. It turns out the kids were getting to him, but in a different way. I talked to him again several weeks later.

"The doctor took one look at me and asked if I was a new teacher," my friend said. "I told him I had just started teaching sixth grade, and then the doctor told me that's why I'm sick."

Huh? My friend laughed; he was feeling better. The doctor told him his case was common. New teachers often came to

him with the same complaint. The first month or so of the school year they constantly have sniffles, sneezes, coughs, aches, fevers, the usual stuff of bad colds. The doctor said they had no resistance to these common illnesses because they had not been exposed to them lately.

When all the kids and teachers crowded into the classrooms at the start of the school year, they passed their germs around. New teachers had the lowest resistance. What my friend was experiencing was not one cold, but a series of them. The symptoms he had were signs the body was fighting off the invaders. Eventually the colds would tail off. Becoming more immune to classroom illnesses was another thing to look forward to when he achieved tenure.

I have noticed that after being at a public event or family gathering, where I am in close contact with a lot of people, I often come down with cold or flu symptoms several days later. In that susceptibility, people are not so different from any other animal. When

IF THERE is an animal that reteaches the general public what can happen when too many wildlife individuals are tolerated too close to too many people, it will be the resident Canada goose.

Bob Steiner



too many animals are in one place, tighter together than is usual, their diseases tend to spread through their populations like fire through sun-dried brush. Wildlife can't all be inoculated individually against every disease, but the overcrowding that exacerbates it can be corrected or avoided.

That's where hunters and trappers provide an essential, even lifesaving, service to all of us. Keeping wild animal populations in check, so the space they have to live in, their available habitat, is not overpopulated, is the most important role of today's hunters and trappers. I'm confident that hunting and trapping will survive into the future because their purpose as controllers of wildlife numbers will only become more necessary.

There's hardly a place in Pennsylvania where people aren't expanding their full-time activities into rural and wild areas. People move to the country, build home after home, super shopping center after super shopping center, highway after highway on vacant land, and wildlife habitat shrinks. That's no surprise. The surprise for some people is what happens when wildlife crowds itself and people.

Wildlife crowding takes place not only because habitat gets smaller, but also when a habitat that was once sufficient for a population becomes overfilled due to the animal's numbers increasing unchecked. Normally, natural predators or those standing in for natural predators (hunters and trappers) cull the excess. Populations fluctuate a bit year to year, but overall the animal's reproduction, those coming into life, is roughly balanced by attrition, those going out of life.

When well-meaning but misinformed people, protect wildlife, sometimes by land use changes that seem to preclude harvest, and both kinds of predators are removed, animal populations can quickly balloon. Deer numbers, for instance, can double in a year. When that is allowed to happen to whitetails, to geese, to skunks, to raccoons and others, having wildlife around becomes

a threat rather than a pleasure.

Rabies is one frightening example. As I'm writing this, small fish-flavored cubes with a surprise inside are being dropped, so a newspaper report says, in the woods in my and neighboring counties. The surprise is a good one, for me and for the raccoons. Due to an increasing incidence of rabies, health officials are air-delivering vaccine dosages. The plan is that raccoons and other wild animals that could contract rabies will find the tasty (to them) tidbits and be inadvertently inoculated against the killer disease. This is being done mostly to protect people who could come in contact with a rabid animal, by keeping the animals from becoming rabid. I'm waiting to see just how effective the vaccine scattering will be, but I'm skeptical.

Furbearers seem to be especially associated with rabies. Perhaps it's their lifestyle, what they eat, or just that they tend to get the affliction easily. When furbearers, in this instance, become overcrowded, the likelihood of disease overtaking their numbers increases. That's why anti-trapping sentiment becomes more misguided every day. When furtaking hunters and trappers are the principal means of limiting these wildlife populations, that society should cater to anti-trapping sensibilities is increasingly intolerable. I hope we won't all have to relearn old lessons the hard way.

In the meantime, if someone says they are worried about the cat bringing rabies home to their kids, tell them they have two choices. Either don't let "Fluffy" out of the house or buy a fur coat, which will support hunters' and trappers' work to control furbearer populations. Besides, fur coats are terrifically warm.

Where I grew up, in suburban New Jersey, my uncle was probably the last person to legally kill a buck. The fields and forests are gone now, but it's not all concrete today. With a system of parks and water supply reservoirs, wooded highway median strips and borders, and spacious, mature-landscaped yards, there's more wildlife —

including deer — in the area now than when I lived there. I'm still half-disbelieving when I hear reports of deer smashed by vehicles, and vice versa, on the main drag.

Deer/car collisions, as well as deer-denuded hedges, are the unfortunate outcome of whitetails returning to my hometown. Quarters are just too close there for both people and the unhunted, exploding deer numbers. To close the parks to allow a controlled shotgun or bow hunt there or on the reservoir lands would raise such an outcry from antihunters that it has not even been suggested. The town officials know what has happened in other municipalities. As for deer contraceptives, even in controlled situations they have been found to be largely ineffective, extremely costly, and even dangerous if the animal is consumed.

I hope none of my family who still live there is injured by a "Bambi" on the pavement. How many people getting hurt will it take until sensibleness sets in and the overwhelming need to reduce deer numbers overrides conciliating people who do not see nature, but only their dream of nature?

I recently read that Lyme disease-carrying blacklegged ticks are spreading in Pennsylvania. Where once the ticks and disease were heard of mostly from the southeast region, the Allegheny National Forest, and Presque Isle peninsula on Lake Erie, now, according to a Penn State report, "the vast majority of counties have at least a small, localized population of ticks."

Lyme disease is named for Lyme, Connecticut, a deer-infested suburb where the illness was first identified. The blacklegged tick was until recently known in Pennsylvania as the deer tick. That name change (a scientific correction that the ticks were one in the same) was actually a shame. By calling it a deer tick, the disease's connection with wildlife was immediately noticeable.

Deer are a major host of the ticks that

carry Lyme disease. If left untreated, in its later stages the disease attacks the nervous system, muscles and heart. It can debilitate with arthritis-like symptoms, even causing paralysis and death. We're talking about what it does to people, not deer. Lyme disease is most common where deer are concentrated in high numbers, where reductions by hunting are insufficient or nonexistent. I'm only waiting to get a newspaper clipping about a Lyme disease breakout in my hometown.

At Presque Isle peninsula, the people visiting the state park and the wildlife that live there are in close proximity. Because the peninsula is rooted, literally, at the city of Erie and otherwise surrounded by water, wildlife overpopulation happens quickly. The deer at Presque Isle carry a high incidence of Lyme disease ticks, something I know personally from having hunted there during one of their controlled hunts. I didn't get a tick on me, but saw others picking ticks off their clothing.

Presque Isle's reputation for ticks has greatly reduced visitors' use of trails in all but the coldest seasons. Keeping deer numbers down at Presque Isle not only allows the peninsula's unique plant community to survive, but is also one of the few things that can be done to reduce the threat of Lyme disease to the millions of people who visit the park each year. Incredibly, the permit hunt was instituted over the vocal protests of anti-hunters.

Canada geese are a prime example of too much of a good thing. Time was when seeing the haughty waterfowl watchfully shepherding their fuzzy young around a lake and watching a V wing overhead was a real treat. Now, many of us are wondering which beach or playground they're headed for. In too many areas, nonmigrating, resident Canada geese have overrun parks, athletic fields, lawns, picnic areas, golf courses and other mowed green areas. The problem is these well-fed geese leave their feces, making what should be human-usable places unusable to hu-

mans. Goose feces taint water supplies and swimming lakes, as well as make filthy obstacle courses of grassy areas we should be able to walk, lounge and play on.

If there is an animal that reteaches the general public what can happen when too many wildlife individuals are tolerated too close to too many people, it will be the resident Canada goose. Special hunting seasons to target these geese, where the environs are safe for shooting, are part of a needed arsenal of control. Perhaps geese in city or suburban sanctuaries should be routinely chased into the air during hunting seasons. The next place they land may have a hunter.

Sportsmen know they do not go afield for mere sport. That word trivializes the

pursuit, and we hunt and trap for many reasons. The instincts and abilities we have for hunting and trapping go far back in our nature. Through them we can experience being a part of the natural world, the enjoyment of a wild game meal for our families, and the double coziness of a self-procured-fur coat. That may be what drives us to hunt and trap, but while we're doing so we are providing a very valuable service to all of society.

Simply put, hunters and trappers help protect everyone from the diseases and damages caused by unnaturally inflated wildlife populations. By culling wildlife, hunters and trappers are being kind; by protesting or preventing that culling, antihunters are being cruel. □

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It seems as though birds are drawn to a spot on the author's mountain that is dedicated to the memory of a special young man.

Alan's Bench

WE HAVE a new bench on our property — a memorial bench — built to honor one of our youngest hunters. Alan Harshberger, 17, died in a collision, through no fault of his, on Memorial Day weekend 2000.

Tim Tyler, a hunter-friend of ours who is a close friend of the Harshbergers, built the bench. He situated it at the top of First Field, tucked back in a grove of Norway spruce trees. There it overlooks the knoll where Alan had his hunting stand.

By November the waving green grasses that form a carpet for Alan's Bench have turned beige. Stands of goldenrod and pearly everlasting have also dried, and they gleam in November's slanting sunlight. The leaves have dropped from the trees on Alan's Knoll, opening up a view of ridge

after ridge, silver and blue in the distance and a dusky rose close-up. From Alan's Bench we can see 55 miles on a clear day, and we name the mountains — Nittany Mountain, Egg Hill, Tussey Mountain, and our own Bald Eagle Ridge.

Our ridge is one of the pre-

mier migratory routes for raptors, and Alan's Bench provides a front seat on the action. Last fall we had a few good days of raptor watching. In mid-October clouds scudded south across a blue sky, and I spotted a sharp-shinned hawk high above and moving fast. It was followed by two red-tailed hawks. After a pause, another redtail hovered for a few seconds and then flew on down the ridge, quickly followed by still another. Next came two sharpies, one right after the other, and an immature redtail that performed a partial talon-drop, as if practicing for next spring's courting.

On October 27, when snow flurries alternated with sun and clouds and a biting wind blew from the northwest, I watched a succession of redtails, four at a time, circling above Sapsucker Ridge. Another one hovered, but most soared straight down the ridge. It looked as if every redtail in the north was flying south. There was rarely a moment when there wasn't at least one redtail in the sky. Altogether I counted 56 in half an hour.

Later, my husband Bruce went up to Alan's Bench and reported the same numbers of redtails still streaming south. To sit on Alan's Bench, head back, feet on one of the slanting stools Tim later built, and watch those birds on the wind and clouds, is to lose myself in one of Nature's greatest performances. And during lulls in the flight, my eyes turn to the spectacular gold, beige, brown, burnt orange, wine-red, pink and purple-leaved trees of Laurel Ridge.



On autumn days when raptors are not migrating, I watch other birds — flocks of cedar waxwings and robins, and once a yellow-bellied sapsucker that landed on a locust tree on Alan's Knoll. It then flew from tree to tree, resting on each briefly, before flying on over Sapsucker Ridge.

On that same early November day, warm breezes wafted over me from the southwest. Falling leaves, catching the upwelling of warm air, flew high above the ridge like birds, before beginning their inevitable twirling descent to the earth. Sixteen calling eastern bluebirds flew past, and an orange sulphur butterfly spiraled up from the dried grasses, followed by a second.

It seems as if birds are drawn to Alan's Bench and knoll. Back on the first day of summer, sitting on Alan's Bench, I heard a harsh *shrack-shrack* call. A sharpie flew up and perched for a moment at the top of a dead locust in the center of Alan's Knoll, giving me time to note its reddish breast and neck, speckled reddish belly, brown back blotched with white, and a banded, flat-edged tail. Then it dove back down into the leafy cover.

Blue jays appeared, first silently, then scolding, and the sharpie flew up to the top of another dead snag. Again I heard a *shrack-shrack*, and again the sharpie dove down and came up, this time on still another tall snag while at least two blue jays silently watched it. When the sharpie started to groom its breast feathers the blue jays moved off as if the raptor was no longer a threat.

Eastern towhees called; common yellowthroats sang; and black-capped chickadees *dee-dee*. In the distance, a ruffed grouse drummed, a pileated woodpecker called, and a scarlet tanager sang. Next to

sing were field sparrows and chipping sparrows. An American goldfinch undulated overhead and a crow flapped past not far from the sharpie, but the crow ignored the little raptor.

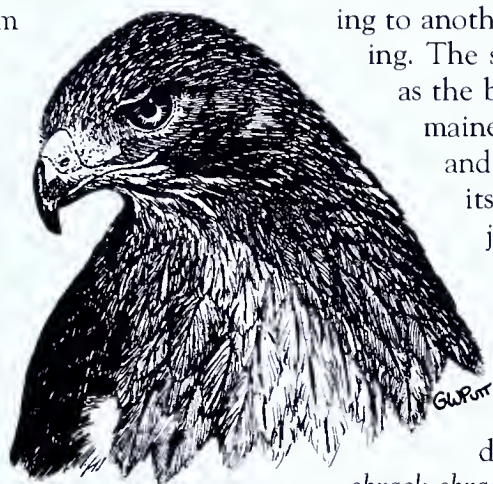
Suddenly, a blue jay flew in and, scolding loudly, dove at the sharpie before landing on a nearby snag. The blue jay watched the raptor for a few minutes and then dove just below the sharpie's perch before fly-

ing to another tree as if in warning. The sharpie looked down as the blue jay dove, but remained stolidly on its perch and continued to groom itself. Finally, the blue jay pushed its luck and landed directly below the sharpie's perch. This was too much for the raptor and it dove

down at the blue jay, *shrack-shracking* while the blue jay yelled *jay-jay*. The sharpie disappeared for a moment, reappeared in the first snag I saw it on, dove, *shrack-shracked* again, and again disappeared into the underbrush. It was like watching a live nature show while sitting in a comfortable chair. All around me birds continued to sing and fly. Chimney swifts seined the air above.

At last the sharpie show ended, or so I thought, but as I got up and walked on I realized that the sharpie was sitting on a snag hidden from Alan's Bench by a locust tree. Although it was a juvenile bird, judging by its still brown back, it had been resourceful enough to make it through the winter and was determined, that day, to catch a meal. So down it dove again as I continued my walk.

On July 30 I walked up to rest on Alan's Bench and heard a peculiar, rattling, gargling sound — *ray, ray, ray* — that went on and on. Finally, I tracked it to an open, grassy area amid the spruces. Then I heard another, more deeply pitched rattle that sounded vaguely cuckoo-like. I sat on the



ground to listen and wait.

At last I saw the wriggling tail of a young bird, the beige-brown top of its head, and its off-white face, and I heard the beginning of a cuckoo call. After much straining to see through the dense branches of the spruce tree, I spotted the black bill and red eye-ring of an adult black-billed cuckoo. It had a caterpillar in its beak. Because both look-alike cuckoo parents feed fledglings, I didn't know whether it was the male or female. I sat there for a long time watching as the parent encouraged its youngster to fly into deeper cover in the same tree. It floundered down, barely able to stay airborne. There seemed to be only one fully feathered young. But apparently, because eggs are laid at infrequent intervals, black-billed cuckoo nestlings often vary in age, so there might have been others still in the nest or the rest might have already flown off.

Like other black-billed cuckoo nestlings, it was in its climbing phase, a phase that lasts for about two weeks before it fledges. Once Francis H. Herrick, who studied the home life of the black-billed cuckoo back in 1935, observed three young birds leave their nest. The oldest one . . . "sat upright for some minutes and gazed into its outer world. Then, directing its attention to a small branch and ducking its head as if contemplating flight, with a leap it cleared the nest, and, catching hold of a twig, with both feet, it swung free with acrobatic dexterity. In another moment it

had pulled itself up and was comfortably perched. If such a first perch is placed in the shade and the young bird is promptly fed, it may keep to it for a long time; but it can move about, and should it drop to the ground, it can mount to safety again."

So, perhaps the youngster I was watching still had days to go before it was on its own. On the other hand, I returned in subsequent days and never heard or saw another cuckoo.

Later, I read that black-billed cuckoos are extremely secretive birds and not much is known about their home life. To have observed as much as I did was a rare privilege. Had I not been resting on Alan's Bench, I never would have heard and then seen such an unusual sight.

But another November is here and the plaque on the bench — "In Memory of Alan L. Harshberger 1983-2000 — The Tim Tyler Family" — reminds me of the fine young boy who will never see another hunting season.

Last December, on an overcast day, I sat on Coyote Bench. Alan's father Charlie, who was hunting, stopped to talk. A doe I had spotted earlier below the Far Field Road walked up the road toward us as if she were listening to our conversation about Alan. We were remembering Alan's first doe and his hope that the following fall he would get his first buck. But he never had that chance.

"He will remain forever 17, Charlie," was all I could think to say.

Sitting on Alan's Bench later, I heard several shots in the distance. I also heard a raven and crows, but mostly I listened to the whisper of dried grasses as they waved in the breeze. Finally, it cleared into a blue-skied, cloud-studded day and the sun shone, brightly illuminating Alan's Knoll. Alan's Bench, however, remained in the shadow of the spruce trees. □



CHARLIE HARSHBERGER and son ALAN with the young man's first deer taken from his favorite stand on the author's property.

Straight from the Bowstring

By P.J. Reilly

Due to our high doe to mature buck ratio, rattling antlers isn't the most effective calling technique. Using grunt tubes and doe bleat calls are another story, though, and can be effective under the right circumstances.

Calling All Deer

TALK ABOUT bowhunting and people are likely to visualize a hunter passively sitting in a treestand, hoping for a deer to walk within range. They envision the hunter doing anything and everything to be quiet, still and odorless to overcome the keen senses of a whitetail. Certainly, that is a great deal of what archery hunting for whitetails is all about, but if you learn to talk to the deer, you can take advantage of their social and mating instincts and increase your odds for success.

An unseasonable cool spell greeted Pennsylvania bowbenders at the start of the 1996 archery season, with temperatures hovering in the low 40s the first few days. Besides forcing me to break out my thermal underwear a bit earlier than usual, the cold weather also stirred some early rut-

ting inclinations in the bucks in my hunting area. Saplings were being shaved on a nightly basis, and scrapes, which I don't usually find in my woods until late October, seemed to be everywhere. That was all the encouragement I needed to carry my buck grunt call into the stand before daybreak on the second day of the season.

Less than an hour after sunrise I spotted a doe and a fawn picking their way through the green undergrowth about 80 yards from my perch. Each time they stopped to feed, they stared behind them. I was certain a third deer was coming, and I guessed it was a buck. Sure enough, a dark form soon materialized from the tangled foliage behind the other two deer.

All three deer were working away from my position, and would soon be out of sight, so I pulled out my grunt call. *Uuurppp*. The deer were walking when I made the call, but at the sound, the third one stopped dead in its tracks and snapped to attention. Although the deer was now facing me, I still couldn't make out any antlers. When the deer turned its attention back to the doe and fawn, I grunted again. Apparently, that was more than the



BOWHUNTERS can find a wide variety of deer calls at their local hunting supply stores.



CALLING may cause a deer that is angling away to change direction and come within bow range.

The trick to calling is knowing where, when and how often to use them. Had it not been so cold, and had I not found so much evidence of rutting activity, I probably wouldn't have grunted to the 6-point I shot in 1996 because it was so early in the season. I've found that grunting too early, before the rut kicks in, is more likely to scare off bucks than to pique their interest.

Fawn bleats, doe bleats and doe grunts are good early season calls. At that time of year, hunters have not yet put too much pressure on the deer, so they're not on high alert all the time, so they're still quite talkative. You can use these calls to bring in both bucks and does. The fawn bleat is especially effective for calling in does. It's a high-pitched, whining sound that says, "Come find me, I'm lost." I've seen does come running full tilt to fawn bleats.

Doe bleats and grunts have a lower pitch than the fawn calls, but are higher-pitched than a buck's. These calls seem to have a wide range of meanings to deer. If conditions are right, hunters working a doe call can generally count on arousing a deer's curiosity enough to draw it within range. When I say, "If conditions are right," I mean if you call to the right deer in the right mood. Call to deer enough times, and you'll find some deer will come running to the sounds you make, while others will run off or show no interest at all. You can increase your odds for calling success by using the right call in the right situation, but even your best efforts can be thwarted by a deer that just isn't interested in what you have to say at that particular moment.

About three weeks into the archery season I start relying heavily on the buck grunt. As the rut begins to take effect, bucks become increasingly curious about, and agitated by, low-pitched buck grunts. I like a grunt call that is adjustable, allowing me to raise and lower the pitch of the

deer could stand. It turned and began walking toward me at a stiff gait. When its head cleared the undergrowth, I finally got a look at its dark, wide rack.

The buck bristled with alertness, its head held high and nostrils flared as it searched for the intruder. Slowly, the 6-point closed the gap between us, and eventually offered me a broadside shot at 15 yards. My arrow's flight was true and it wasn't long before I was filling out my tag.

Although they are considered quiet, stealthy animals, deer are actually quite vocal. Fawns bleat when they're lost. Does bleat and grunt to their youngsters and to one another while minding the herd. And, as we all know, bucks will grunt when chasing a doe in heat and to ward off intruding males.

Today there are countless calls on the market capable of reproducing these deer vocalizations. All the bowhunters I know — including me — have brands they swear by. I'm not going to tell you one call is better than another. You have to find the ones that work best for you.

call, giving me a wider variety of sounds. The rule of thumb governing grunts is the lower the pitch, the older the buck. If you spot a young buck, and hit him with your lowest-pitched call, chances are he's going to take off rather than risk tangling with an older buck. Also, a big, dominant buck may not respond to a wimpy, high-pitched grunt, because he figures that buck is no threat to him.

I work a grunt call in two ways. If I'm not seeing deer on a particular day, I'll let out a series of three or four blind grunts every 20 or 30 minutes, hoping to draw in an unseen buck. I'll also use the grunt call in certain situations when I can see a buck. If the deer is working toward my position, I won't call because there's no need to alert the buck. There's no guarantee every deer will come to every call you make. Sometimes, calling to deer sends them in the other direction. I like to grunt to a buck when it's not coming toward me or looking in my direction. Deer have an amazing ability to pinpoint the location from where a sound originates. If a buck is looking your way when you make a call and he doesn't see another deer, he might smell a rat and beat it out of there.

Which brings us to the question, "How much should you call?" Because you are not a deer, you never want the deer you're calling to know exactly where the sound you're making is coming from. Generally, less is best. You want to call just enough to get a deer's attention and make it curious enough to try to find the "deer" it hears.

A few years ago, I took a buddy out hunting with me. The plan was for him to hunt from one stand while I sat in a nearby tree and worked a few calls for him. Before daylight, we heard what sounded like a buck doggedly pursuing a doe. By listening to the rustling leaves we could follow the figure eight path of the chase. The

whole time the deer were running around we could hear a buck grunting incessantly. He obviously was intent on catching up to whatever he was pursuing.

Come daylight, the woods was quiet and no deer were in sight. A few hours passed without any action and, after looking through the woods all around me to be sure no deer were in the area, I made a single grunt with one of my calls to get my buddy's attention. Using hand signals, I let him know I planned to climb down and walk around the woods to try to stir up some deer.

I stood up and turned around to face the tree I was in to begin my descent when I spotted a buck walking up the hill directly behind me toward my stand. His head was up scanning the woods in front of him and his ears swiveled like radar dishes. No doubt, he was looking for the "buck" that had just grunted. To my amazement, the 5-point stopped directly beneath my stand, which was about 15 yards from my buddy's. As I watched the buck through the slats in my treestand's platform, my buddy drilled the deer with a perfect shot.

Rattling is a form of calling in which a hunter bangs two antlers together, or works



THIS 8-POINT responded to the author's doe bleats and grunt calls during the last week of the 2000 archery season.

a bag or box call designed to make a clicking noise, to mimic the sound of two bucks fighting. Working a buck grunt call in concert with rattling adds to the call's realism. I mention rattling because it is a form of deer calling, but here in Pennsylvania, I think rattling can do more harm than good.

Rattling works best in areas like Texas where the buck to doe ratio is close to 1 to 1. Bucks in those areas frequently have to fend off rival bucks to protect their harems during the rut. In Pennsylvania, our buck to doe ratio heavily favors does. Simply put, bucks don't have to fight each

other to protect their harems. There are plenty of does to go around. That doesn't mean rattling doesn't work. I've heard plenty of stories about bowhunters rattling in bucks. But when rattling does work in Pennsylvania, it tends to draw in only younger bucks just learning the ways of the woods. Most often, however, rattling draws no reaction from Pennsylvania bucks or, even worse, it scares them away.

If you're tired of helplessly watching deer consistently slink past your stand just out of bow range, try some calling this season. You just might reel in that buck of a lifetime. □

***Fun Games* — By Connie Mertz**

Fact or Fiction

Copy **only** those numbers of the **eight** correct statements about the ring-necked pheasant in the spaces, and then use the first four numbers to complete the first fact below, and the remaining four numbers to finish the second statement.

- _____ Pheasants are closely related to quail. (1)
- _____ Males are called "cockers." (5)
- _____ Females are as colorful as the males. (6)
- _____ Pheasant eggs are an olive-green color. (8)
- _____ Farmland is prime pheasant habitat. (9)
- _____ Pheasants eat lots of grain and weed seeds. (2)
- _____ Male pheasants crow mostly on hot days. (3)
- _____ Pheasants hear and see well. (1)
- _____ Pheasants can run up to 60 miles per hour. (4)
- _____ Males have a white ring around their necks. (9)
- _____ Pheasants will roost in trees, if available. (1)
- _____ Chicks remain in the nest up to a week after hatching. (7)
- _____ Pheasant populations have dwindled since the 1970s. (5)

Pheasants were first stocked in _____ by R. Stuyvesant on private land in New Jersey.

The Pennsylvania Game Commission purchased both pheasants and eggs from Oregon beginning in _____.

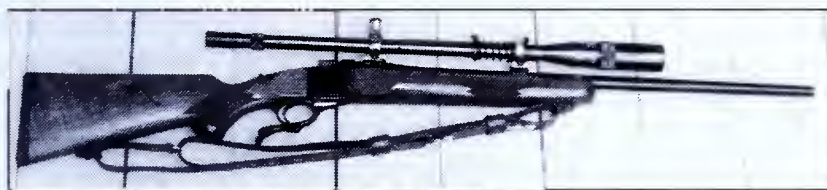
answers on p. 63

The Shooters' Corner

By Jim Romanelli

Beginning this month Don Lewis is joined by Jim Romanelli, Dave Ehrig and John McGonigle in penning our "Shooters' Corner" column. As with the "Straight from the Bowstring" column, and "Crossings," featuring the views and experiences of four experts will add to the diversity and value of this column for new and veteran shooters.

The True Rifle Sling



THE TRUE "MILITARY SLING" is versatile, and with a little practice can be easily mastered. No matter the shooting position, the adjustable sling on this Ruger No. 1 allows a steadier sight picture.

forend and buttstock, thereby created the first rifle sling.

Throughout the centuries and up until the early 1900s, the sling remained pretty much the same

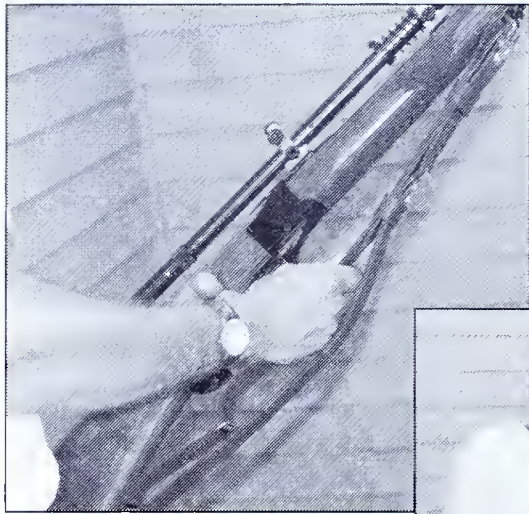
TODAY, most hunters who tote a rifle in the field for any length of time use a sling, and from what I've seen, 90 percent of those slings are designed for one purpose only: to serve as a carrying strap. Outside of shooting matches, it's seldom that I see anyone using a true sling.

Before going on about today's slings, let's back up a little to the 15th century, when man built the first matchlock rifle. I suspect that seconds after completing his masterpiece and holding it up to admire, he realized just how heavy that combination of wood and steel really was, and that he quickly began to think of an easier way to carry it. He most likely spied a piece of rope or leather and looped it around the

carrying strap that it always had been. About the only advancement occurred with the advent of swivels and a buckle to adjust the strap's length.

About the beginning of the 20th century, the U.S. army began to develop a true sling designed to serve as not only as a carrying strap, so hands and arms would be free, but also as a tool for a quick, steady, shot, and as a shooting brace for attaining a steady hold when shooting at long ranges.

It was with the adoption of military target shooting around 1907 when the sling was perfected and, of course, it was dubbed the "military sling." It didn't take long for the civilian population to know a good thing when they saw it, and over the years



TO LOOSEN the sling for a shooting brace slip both keepers up toward the top, pull down on the outside strap until you have it where you want it, then twist the sling toward you and slip your arm through the leather loop right up to above the bicep.



since, millions have been sold.

The military sling consists of two leather straps and two small leather keepers. One strap has a metal double hook at one end, and a series of dual holes along the leather. The other strap also has hooks on one end, along with the same series of holes, but the other end has a metal loop. The two "keepers" serve to keep the hooks in place, as well as keep the sling tight around the arm. Looped together, these straps became an adjustable tool that fits anyone, and effectively locks the shooter into the rifle for better accuracy. One quick pull on the outside strap loosens the sling for use to either carry the rifle across the shoulder or to slip an arm through when aiming. A pull on the inside strap tightens it when it isn't needed.

As the military improved the accuracy of its artillery and mortar fire, the rifle began to lose much of its usefulness for long-range shooting (except for some situations), and so the military sling began to slowly fade from use, as the web sling was being issued in the 1940s (although some

military slings were used with the M14 rifle in the 1960s). Even if the web sling couldn't be used as a shooting brace, it served fairly well as a hasty sling when the shooter needed a bit more steadiness.

Today, about the only time the true sling is used is on the target range by those who

need to achieve every ounce of accuracy from their rifle when shooting in matches at targets 200 to 1,000 yards away.

With the advent of bipods and the renewed interest in shooting sticks, the true military sling has gone by the way-

side with most hunters and shooters. That's too bad, because the sling is versatile, and with a little practice can be easily mastered.

There are times, outside of competition, when I still use a sling, such as squirrel hunting with a .22 rifle, or varmint hunting with my single-shot .22 K-Hornet. No matter if I take a prone, sitting or even kneeling position, the sling allows me to easily gain a steadier sight picture.

The true leather military-type sling comes in 1-inch or 1¼-inch widths, and even though both sizes do the job equally well, I find the 1¼-inch more comfortable to use. Even though it may look complicated, operating this sling is fairly simple, and it begins with learning how to assemble it.

First, place the strap without the metal loop through both keepers and then through a swivel and back through the keepers again. Second, place the hooks of that same strap through the metal loop of the other strap and bring the hooks of that first strap back up to hook into itself. Third, slip the strap with the metal loop on the end through the other sling swivel and bring the hooks of that strap back up

around and hook it into the first strap below the first hook. Next, slip the keepers to just below the hooks to keep them in place, and then place it on your rifle with the hooks on the outside strap with the points of the hooks pointing toward the butt.

To tighten, just pull down on the inside strap. If it doesn't tighten completely then the hook on the top strap needs to be adjusted to a different set of holes, and the hook on the bottom will follow it.

To loosen for a carry strap or a hasty sling, just pull on the outside strap and sling it across your shoulder or place your arm between the rifle and sling up beyond your bicep and swing your hand around so that the sling is resting on the back of it and the forearm is in the palm.

To loosen for a shooting brace slip both keepers up toward the top, pull down on the outside strap until you have it where you desire, and then twist the sling towards you and slip your arm (that supports the forearm of the rifle) through the leather loop right up to above your bicep. Push the keepers down to the bicep and swing your hand around the sling so that the rifle forend is in your palm and the sling is against the back of your hand.

When placing the butt of the rifle into your shoulder, you should feel the tension of the sling in three places. First, pushing the rifle into your shoulder, second, on the upper arm that holds the forend, and third, against the back of the hand of that same arm.

If the sling is too tight, you won't be able to get the buttstock into your shoulder, and the tension of the sling on your hand will be very uncomfortable. If it's too loose, the buttstock will easily go to your shoulder and you won't feel any sling tension at all. In either case adjust the hooks to tighten or loosen to the preferred tension. Actually, I find that if the tension is enough to where I need to use my free hand to place the buttstock into my shoulder, I



FOR A QUICK SHOT, using the setup as a "hasty sling" (arm not through strap loop) gives a steadier hold than shooting offhand.

know I have it right. At this point I draw a line across the set of holes that I placed the hooks into, so if the sling gets adjusted for someone else, I'll know right where it was.

Most competition shooters unhook the bottom strap from the top strap and rehook it back on itself before loosening the sling. This gives the buttstock a little more freedom in movement and makes the sling seem less confining.

I realize this seems complicated, but the hook adjustments are made only once, and from then on it's just a matter of pulling on the leather straps to loosen or tighten. You'll probably find that the military-type sling may not work on some of the shorter ultralight rifles because the swivel studs are closer together. For these rifles I use a simple carry strap that is the same width throughout and has a simple buckle to make it fully adjustable at a touch. It won't lock me into my rifle as does a true sling, but in a pinch it works pretty well.

If you want to see just how good you can be without using shooting sticks or a bipod, give a true rifle sling a try. I think you'll be surprised how, with just a little practice, your skill and confidence will improve. □

Fun Game answers:

1892, 1915.

CROSSINGS

10:30

I ARRIVED at my parent's house late the night before and have to get my archery gear together in the morning, and am running behind. When I get to the truck "The GF" already has the windows scraped and is leaning against the truck with his arms folded. We call my father "The GF" whenever he orchestrates whatever the current activity may be, like he did years before as a general foreman in the steel mill. "Take your time," he says, feigning patience.

We get to the woods at gray light, and The GF isn't happy, because he likes to be on stand early. He groans when a buck and doe trot across the road, jump the embankment and slant up the hill toward his stand.

While parking the truck The GF lays out the agenda for the day. "Now, listen. We'll hunt for a couple hours. Be back at 10:30 sharp. We'll go to the gunshop first, then after lunch head up to the range. I want to pattern that new turkey gun, then we'll sight in the rifles. We'll come back up here for an afternoon hunt. 10:30, okay?"

I walk up a tram road for a quarter mile, then remember my quiver back in the truck. Thank goodness I have the extra key. The GF really hates being bothered when he's in his treestand.

I can tell where I am on the familiar road by the leaves underfoot. Up through the maples, now through a long tunnel of hemlocks where the puddles are rimmed with the tracks of deer, turkeys and a bear. Uphill now through the sweet birch. When acorns grind under my boots I cut down to the creek, slice up through a slot and still-hunt the first flat.

At 9:15 a doe, backlit by the sun, skirts the dark wall of hemlocks where I sit in deep shadow. She goes less than ten yards after my shot. I drag her down a different slot to the creek, but I'm too far down and now must wrestle the deer up through an expanse of boulders.

Once on the road I get a second wind, and the deer rolls along over the acorns, as on ball bearings. I think I can make it back by The GF's deadline, but I'm a long way from the truck. The deer slides along quickly, making a hollow hissing sound on the carpet of newly fallen leaves and gravel.

When I come around the corner my pocketwatch shows 10:29. The GF is leaning against the truck, staring up into the woods. He looks over at me and is surprised and excited to see that I have a deer in tow.

"Hey, what do you got there?"

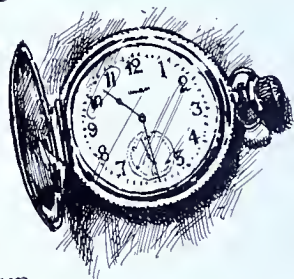
"You said 10:30. Well, here I am, exactly on time."

I'm a big guy, but the GF is much bigger. He shakes my hand then gets me in a headlock, rubs my head hard with his knuckles. "Think you're real smart, don't you?"

"Smarter than you."

He strikes his best general foreman pose, with hands on hips looking up into the woods through narrowed eyes. "Alright, he says. "Let's get this deer loaded up and see if you can get a buck later on."

"You're the boss," I tell him.



Bob Soperchick

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PENNSYLVANIA GAME NEWS (ISSN 0031-451X) is published monthly for \$12 per year, \$34.50 for three years, or membership in Pennsylvania's Cooperative Farm-Game Project or Safety Zone Project; to Canada and all other foreign countries, \$13 U.S. currency, per year. Published by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Phone (717) 787-4250. Periodicals postage paid at Harrisburg, Pa. CHANGE OF ADDRESS: POSTMASTER: Send both old and new addresses to Pennsylvania Game News, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Allow six weeks for processing. Material accepted is subject to our requirements for editing and revising. Author payment covers all rights and title to accepted material, including manuscripts, photographs, drawings and illustrations. No information contained in this magazine may be used for advertising or commercial purposes. Opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Copyright © 2002 by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, an Equal Opportunity Employer, the programs of which are all administered consistent with the goals and objectives of Affirmative Action. All rights reserved.

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Newsstand consultant, Celtic Moon Publishing, 1-877-730-6263



PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

www.pgc.state.pa.us

editorial

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2002 will probably go down as the year of new antler restrictions, but much more than just that has been accomplished over the past year.

One of the most extensive studies of buck movements and survival ever conducted was launched. A record 1.03 million antlerless deer licenses were allocated, to offset the number of antlered deer expected to survive because of the antler restrictions.

Work began on a new deer management plan. With the help from many representatives from outside the agency, long-term deer management goals and objectives have been created.

In a move nobody could have anticipated or wanted, the Game Commission on August 1 closed Pennsylvania's borders to the importation of live deer and elk, to safeguard against chronic wasting disease being brought into the state. The potentially devastating threats of CWD, coupled with West Nile Virus and what at press time was thought to be epizootic hemorrhagic disease (EHD) in the southwest part of the state served not only as grim reminders of how vulnerable wildlife can be to diseases, but also how little we know about them.

As the year was drawing to a close, new proposed wildlife management units (see page 26) were unveiled. Based on habitat, land ownership and human densities — rather than political boundaries — the new units promise to improve wildlife management and simplify regulations for hunters and trappers.

While perhaps not as noteworthy, at least among hunters, the new state game lands regulations approved this year may very well turn out to be the most significant and far-reaching. Taking effect this coming February, the new regulations will greatly enhance the value of state game lands for wildlife and for hunting and trapping — the reasons they've been purchased. More on these new regulations will be covered later, when they take effect, but it's important to remember that the new regulations will not restrict hunting and trapping.

Along those same lines, the Game Commission purchased more than 2,000 acres this year. That land acquisition has been able to continue for more than 80 years is a tribute to strong support from hunters and trappers, and to the outstanding cooperation from the land conservancies and many other organizations and individuals who recognize the value of state game lands.

This year a special bear season was set for Pike, Monroe and Carbon counties, to address the growing incidents of bear problems there. That in the past 25 years or so we have gone from having no open bear season to now having not just a statewide 3-day season, but a 1-week season concurrent with deer season is a testament to the resounding success of the agency's bear program.

New youth hunting opportunities, the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, the K-9 program, growing bald eagle and peregrine falcon populations, continued bobcat and elk seasons: The list goes on.

2002 has been a good year for the Game Commission, wildlife, hunters and trappers, and all others interested in the well-being of outdoor Pennsylvania. — *Bob Mitchell*

letters

Editor:

Vehicle to drive to deer camp, \$32,000; hunting rifle with scope, \$800; hunting clothes, accessories, new gadgets and ammo, \$1,000; nonresident hunting license, \$100. Spending a week in deer camp with Dad, brothers, sister, nephews, niece, brother-in-law, and seeing uncles, cousins and best friend — Priceless.

R.A. STEFANAK
CHICAGO HEIGHTS, IL

Editor:

In less than 35 minutes of reading your September issue I amassed more knowledge regarding oak trees and venison care than I had absorbed in more than 35 years of various outdoor activities. The articles by Chuck Fergus and Jerry Chiapetta were both interesting and informative.

D. WEAVER
LIMERICK

Editor:

Your October cover portrayed an unsafe act. Carrying a turkey over the shoulder presents a target for other hunters. It displays red, white and, perhaps, blue — colors turkey hunters are encouraged not to wear — plus there's the movement of the wings and tail. A vest with a gamebag or a fluorescent orange bag made specifically for carrying a turkey are much better.

M. MCBETH
SHIPPENSBURG

Editor:

Paul Ludtke, a long time sportsman and deputy in the

Hello,

How are your hunting adventures progressing? A lot of people here have the bug and wish they were back home, especially when they get the news that someone's someone got a big one.

I'm just counting the days until next season. Ha, ha, ha. I hope the seasons thus far have been uneventful in the way of incidents. Luckily, we have relatively few incidents here, all minor.

It's hunting season here as well, except we can't go outside the wire to participate, not that I would; can't trust anywhere you step in the grass. Mostly, it's pheasants and wild pigs here. A lot of hunters (no fluorescent orange) use 12-gauge side-by-sides with a 7.62x54R under, for the occasional pig with an attitude. Most of them are made here in the local area or come from Germany.

I really miss this time of year back home. The leaves are turning here, but it's not the same. Oh well, got to run. The months are flying by.

PHIL LUCKENBAUGH
PGC HUNTER EDUCATION SPECIALIST
SERVING ON ACTIVE DUTY IN SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE

Philadelphia area died September 18, 2002, at the age of 93. Paul served with many officers, and when Philadelphia was without a full-time salaried officer, Paul handled the area. He was a tireless, loyal, devoted and dedicated deputy.

GLENN L. BOWERS
(RETIRED PGC EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR)
DILLSBURG

Editor:

Thanks for a great magazine. My husband just subscribed to it. I had read it many times when my brother-in-law gave us issues. I grew up in Pennsylvania and my husband hunted many years

in Pennsylvania with my dad and brothers. I especially enjoy the Field Notes.

E.F. KRALL
BEAVER DAM, WI

Editor:

After reading "Woman Behind the Badge" by Bill Bower in the March issue, I would also like to say that many deputies, too, have a woman (or man) behind the badge.

Bill stated that "when you look behind the badges, however, you're going to find spouses who have made the Game Commission what it is today. As a deputy, I agree.

J. FLORY
MIDDLETOWN

Your comments are welcome. Mail them to "Letters," 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Letters will be edited for brevity and clarity.

Dad's Deer

IT WAS the sixth day of deer season and I had yet to see a deer. I had spent the first two days in the mountains, scouring thickets, swamps and steep hillsides without seeing so much as a white tail. Now, the lack of time to hunt dictated that the rest of the season would be spent close to home. The downside to living in one of Pennsylvania's Special Regulation Areas is that you have to leave your prized rifle in the gun cabinet, but the upside is that there are some big bucks in those areas.

Since my father passed away, I had had little time to do anything but work and, with any spare time, try to reduce the pile of official papers that always seems to be generated at the worst possible times. Truth is, though, I wasn't anxious to return to the woods, because it only reminded me of the many camping and hiking adventures my father and I had shared. He taught me an appreciation for nature, a respect for the outdoors, and a love of the woods — the easiest lessons I've ever learned.

On that first Saturday of the season I got up early, and while dressing I could feel the metallic chill of dog tags against my chest. While sorting through my father's personal items, I had found his Navy Reserve dog tags, the ones he brought home after his

honorable discharge in 1946. I began wearing them after his death, as a way of always having a part of him with me. Grasping the dog tags, I looked up and said a silent pray of thanks for everything he had ever done for me.

Three factors were working against my chances of filling my buck tag. First, the private property I planned to hunt wasn't known for harboring many bucks. Second, statistics showed the vast majority of bucks were taken by the third day of the season and, third, Special Regulation Areas, where a large number of antlerless licenses are issued, and due to their proximity to heavily populated areas, receive an extraordinary amount of hunting pressure. I would have been satisfied taking a doe and putting an unpleasant year behind me.

The property I planned to hunt is a 100-acre preserve in the middle of a housing development. Except for an adjoining state park, there aren't any other large tracts of woods for miles around. The landowner is a retired gentleman who doesn't hunt anymore, but enjoys seeing others pursue the overabundant whitetails on his property. I'm privileged to be able to hunt there, and I happily abide by his rules, which include signing in and out for each hunt.

I arrived an hour before first light. Stepping into the dimly lit shed, I saw a blank sign-in sheet. It meant I would be the first hunter on the property that morning. I

By Robert H. Miller



innelly

was beginning to have a good feeling about the day. The howling of the owner's prize-winning hounds faded and the sound of crunching gravel grew louder as I walked to the end of the long driveway. I crossed a country road and continued walking to the far corner of the property. I was headed to my favorite spot, a funnel joining a large field and mature woods at the base of a brushy hillside. With a half hour until daylight, I slowed to a silent pace and approached an old pine grove on the eastern end of the property. Down the center of the grove was a game trail worn deep by generations of deer passing from their bedding area on the brushy hillside to their feeding area in the woods.

The combination of the funnel, the proximity to public lands, and the pine grove created a prime deer hunting location where, surprisingly, I've never seen another hunter. I stopped at the last pine tree in the row. Large low hanging branches negated the need for a treestand. Twenty feet up were two branches, one arranged above the other. I could stand on the lower branch and sit on the upper branch; it was as comfortable as an armchair. I eased to the base of the tree and hoisted myself up onto the first branch. It was the height of this first branch that discouraged other hunters from using this tree. I pulled and stepped until I reached the upper branch and then sat down to catch my breath. I pulled my shotgun up with a rope, and as the sky began to lighten, I slipped three slugs into my Remington SPS pump and quietly contemplated the events of the past six months.

As first light began filtering into the woods I heard six distant shots fired in rapid order. An hour later there had been only three more shots. Either no

one was moving or very few hunters were about. The woods were silent except for two squirrels noisily chasing one another through the dried leaves. By 8 o'clock the sun was still hidden by low clouds and a gray overcast sky stretched from horizon to horizon. When it began to rain, I welcomed the drizzle for its quieting effect.

I had nearly given up hope of seeing any deer at all when I was startled from a daydream by the whistle of another hunter. It was the same type of whistle my father had always used to get my attention. I peered into the field in front of me but saw nothing. I slowly turned my head to look behind me and my heart skipped a beat when I noticed a deer picking along the trail. Although the heavy pine branches, which reached to the ground, hid the deer's head and body from view, they allowed me to stand and slowly shoulder my gun without being seen.

I winced when the slide rattled and the deer stopped. I could see its back muscles rippling as it rotated its head and twisted its neck, looking for the unnatural sound. Adrenaline made it difficult to hold the gun steady, but I took a deep breath, relaxed, and held at the opening past the last tree limb. My finger was on the safety.

About that time the sun broke free of the clouds and illuminated a symmetrical, polished 8-point rack. At the sight of those white antlers, I pushed the safety and it clicked loudly. The deer instantly crouched, ready to run, and then it lunged forward. As the deer's shoulder met the bead on the barrel, I squeezed the trigger and the gun boomed. I watched in amazement as the deer was lifted from its feet and turned before it fell into the wet winter grass. I exhaled deeply, in unison with the fallen buck, and the woods were silent once again. The *ca-ching* of the gun broke the silence as I chambered another round in case the buck got back up.

Five minutes later I was still in the tree, lost in thoughts of field-dressing, dragging and butchering, when an older hunter ap-

proached. He looked at the buck then looked at me, smiled, and motioned me down from the tree. I unloaded my gun, unbuckled my safety harness, and climbed down to the ground. I walked to the buck and the other hunter extended his hand, "Nice buck," he said. "You know, when I turned onto the upper trail I saw this deer sticking its head out of the brush," he continued. "Before I could line him up in my crosshairs he was gone."

After hearing this, I extended my hand and thanked the hunter for pushing the buck in my direction. The man proceeded to tell me that he was up in years and suffered with health problems, but he still felt the need to be in the woods. "I don't go up to the mountains anymore," he said. "I can't walk the hills, but figured I could walk the trails around here and maybe see something worthwhile." I admired his perseverance and hoped I'd still be hunting at his age.

Although this older hunter approached from the opposite direction from where I had heard the whistle, I thought he could have been the one who alerted me to the buck's presence. If I hadn't heard that whistle, I never would have spotted the deer walking behind me, and I never would have known of the buck's silent approach. "Did you whistle?" I asked. "No. You have someone else to thank for that," he replied, as he disappeared down the trail.

Puzzled by his answer, I was more determined than ever to thank the hunter who alerted me. I hastily filled out my tag and attached it to the buck's ear. I walked quickly to where I had heard the whistle, but didn't see anyone. Then I went another 50 yards into the woods, but there was no one there, either. Disappointed at not being able to thank the hunter who had helped me take my best buck ever, I reluctantly returned to field-dress the deer.

Before beginning the chore, however, I gave special thanks for the deer and felt

the same mixture of sadness and euphoria that most every hunter feels after harvesting game. Even though my father wasn't with me, I felt his presence. We had shared many nonhunting triumphs together, and the taking of this buck made me feel the same way.

The warm temperature necessitated a rapid rendering of the deer. I dragged the buck to the nearest road just as the landowner's caretaker happened to drive by. I was glad for the chance to stop for a few minutes and cool off. The caretaker, a toughened West Virginian with the reserve of mountain folk, remarked, "It's not the biggest 8-point I've seen, but I'd still drag it out of the woods."

After I promised to return with some venison for his freezer, I stopped at the nearest store and telephoned a good friend and hunting partner. He had the necessary equipment to complete the butchering. He answered on the fourth ring and after saying hello, he asked me what I was doing. "I'm trying to figure out what to do with the 8-point I got this morning," I replied.

"I had a dream you got an 8-point this morning," he said. I thought he was joking as I let out a big laugh. Hearing me, he said, "I'm not kidding. Bring it over."

We were well into butchering before I told him about my hunt. He listened as I mentioned the buck appeared under my tree after I had heard a whistle. It wasn't until after I heard my own words that I realized my father had been with me that morning. Who else could have whistled like that at just the right moment? I looked to the heavens and toasted the best man I'll ever know —Thanks, Dad. □

Sonny and Sher

By Bill Wasserman

Wyoming County WCO

WHEN THE TRUCK cruised by her house, feminine intuition told her something was wrong. Two men were transporting the skinned carcass of a deer in their pickup. Her husband and she had discovered several deer carcasses dumped along the road in recent weeks. Most had the hindquarters and back-straps cut away, the rest left for scavengers. Perhaps the men were responsible.

Within minutes they were after them. The pickup was well ahead as they pursued the suspects down the winding mountain road, hoping to catch a glimpse of their truck before it disappeared. Then, in the distance they saw them pulling from the edge of the road at a place where the bank dropped to the river. Here the deer had been dumped like so much garbage.

Unaware they were being followed, the suspects turned onto Route 6 and pulled into a convenience store. But before its occupants could exit, the man and his wife blocked them in.

I was 20 miles away when my radio blurted that a woman in Tunkhannock had called for help with two poachers she had cornered. I picked up my mike and asked dispatch to summon whatever officers they could to assist. Fortunately, both borough and state police were nearby, securing the scene until deputies Gene Gaydos and Joe Shivock arrived.

By the time I arrived, the deputies had secured blood and hair evidence from the truck's bed and had taken pertinent information regarding the case. I spoke with the witnesses first, thanking them, then walked over to the men in the truck. "Why did you dump the deer?" I asked.

"Sherman asked me to help him get rid of it 'cause it smelled," the younger of the two spoke up. He was in his early 20s. "I didn't think we'd get into trouble."

"Who shot the deer?" I asked.

"Sher did."

"Who?"

"Sherman," he glanced at his partner. "We call him Sher. You know, like Sonny and Sher."

"I see."

"Officer, I don't even hunt," he pleaded. "I just let him use my truck. I'm not looking for trouble."

I turned to Sherman. Archery season was open, and I assumed he'd killed the deer legally with a bow and had ditched the carcass because it was spoiled. "When did you shoot the deer?" I asked.

"Last night," Sherman motioned toward his friend. "But he didn't have anything to do with it."

His reply jolted my senses. Last night, I wondered. Is this guy telling me he jacklighted the deer? "What time last night?" I pressed.



"Seven o'clock."

"It would have been pitch black by then," I said, astounded by the almost surreal matter-of-factness in his tone. "What kind of light did you use?"

"A spotlight."

I pushed my luck for all it was worth. "If you shot the deer, then who was holding the light?"

"Sonny."

"Whose gun did you use?"

"Sonny's."

"Whose vehicle?"

"Sonny's."

"Okay," I said. "It's time to visit Sonny."

Sonny lived two miles away, on a rural dead-end road, his small house cradled within a hardwood forest. White smoke with the pleasant, woodsy odor of smoldering oak and maple drifted lazily above the roof, and I pictured a warm and crackling fireplace inside. I could see movement through a broad picture window. A man in a white T-shirt stepped out the back door. I quickly exited my Bronco and strode 40 yards to the rear of the house. A young man, his back facing me, raked leaves into a small fire. "Sonny?" I called. He turned and stared at me dully, continuing to push leaves into the flames, and I suddenly realized the smoke I'd seen wasn't coming from a fireplace. "I'm not Sonny," he said.

The back door was three feet from my shoulder. I turned as it lurched opened. A young man stepped out. He wore a black T-shirt and denim pants. Thick brown hair fell to his collar, his face dark and brooding. "I'm Sonny," he snapped. "What do you want here?"

I identified myself, and then informed him we were investigating a jacklighting case and had reason to believe he was involved.

Sonny shrugged indifferently, "I don't know anything about it."

My eyes locked with his and I felt my jaw involuntarily clench. "Oh?" I said. "That's not what Sher tells me."

Sonny's eyes widened as he glanced over

my shoulder. Sherman stood woodenly while Deputy Gaydos continued to question him in the driveway below. "If you think Sher and his buddy are going to take the whole rap for this, you're wrong," I said. "I know you held the spotlight while Sherman shot the deer. I also know it was your vehicle and your gun. It's time to talk, my friend," I leveled at him.

Sonny glared in Sher's direction. Deputy Gene Gaydos was questioning him, and he knew the gig was up. "Okay. You're right," he admitted. "What happens now?"

"Where is the gun you used?" I said.

"I don't have it."

"What do you mean you don't have it?"

"I gave it to a friend."

"What friend?"

Sonny shrugged. "I can't tell you that."

"Don't play games with me, Sonny," I cautioned. "I'm giving you a chance to cooperate. If you come clean with me, there's a good chance that only you and Sher will be prosecuted. I have a feeling more of your buddies are involved. This may be your chance to cut them a break."

Sonny's eyes dropped for a moment then bored through me. "It's buried in the leaves," he muttered nodding toward the woods. "C'mon."

After retrieving his .22 rifle, I questioned him further. He told me that Sher shot the deer in the head with his rifle while he held the spotlight. They loaded the deer in Sonny's Blazer and transported it to Sonny's backyard. After removing the entrails they noticed a foul odor coming from the body cavity and decided to get rid of the carcass.

"Where are the entrails and the skin?" I asked.

"Sher and a friend of his dumped them."

Bill Wasserman recently published a new book, *Pennsylvania Wildlife Tails, A Game Warden's Notebook*. A prolific writer, many *Game News* readers no doubt remember the "Looking Back" column Bill wrote for *Game News* in 1993 and the other stories he has penned (*The Killers, Graveyard Shift*, etc.) about his experiences as a WCO. Bill's new book contains 48 tales about people and animals, each illustrated by Dana Twig of Sayre. Featured in this softcover, 104 page book are some of the funniest and most amazing anecdotes Bill has experienced in the more than 40 years that he has been associated with Pennsylvania wildlife.

Pennsylvania Wildlife Tails can be ordered from Penn's Woods Publications, 25 Dogwood Drive, Tunkhannock, PA 18657. The price is \$8.95 (PA residents add 6 percent sales tax) plus \$1.83 for shipping. Visa/MasterCard call 570/836-2052.

"What friend? Give me a name," I said, turning to Sherman.

Sherman's face wilted with dread. "What's gonna happen to him?" he moaned.

"I don't know yet," I said, pulling a pad and pen from my pocket. "We haven't finished our investigation."

He told me the name. I jotted it down, and then told Sonny and Sher I wanted to see the bag of entrails and where they had shot the deer. "Take Sonny's vehicle," I said. "We'll follow."

After driving a mile, Sonny parked adjacent to a driveway that led to a home. Sher jumped from the passenger side, his face exuding a sense of relief that the matter was coming to a close. "It's over here somewhere," he called, dashing into the briars. Within seconds, Sher trudged out lugging a plastic bag stretched taut and bulging.

"Know what the fine is for dumping?" I asked.

Sher stopped dead in his tracks and gaped at me, his head retracting turtle-like into his shoulders. I hoisted the bag into the bed of Gene's truck, "You're looking at a \$300 bag of guts," I said. "But we'll talk about that later."

Sonny and Sher continued down the dirt road, while Gene Gaydos and I followed. Soon we turned into Eaton Hills. I thought at first that they had missed the kill site and were merely pulling into the housing development to turn around, then I saw them veer to the right and stop. Both men stepped out of Sonny's Blazer and stared into a grassy field. I shook my head in disbelief. "You can't be serious," I said.

"This is where we did it," Sonny said, pointing into the field. "I parked in the driveway behind us and Sher shot the deer right over there."

"Do you realize what you did?" I asked. "That driveway leads to a home, a stable and horses, and there are three other houses and a pole barn surrounding us. You shot directly toward the road. Suppose you had missed, suppose someone had been walking along that road. You could have killed someone."

Gradually, Sonny's gaze shifted away from me, then returned in cinematic slow motion, eyes flat and dark. "Guess we weren't thinking," he said with a dismissive half-shrug.

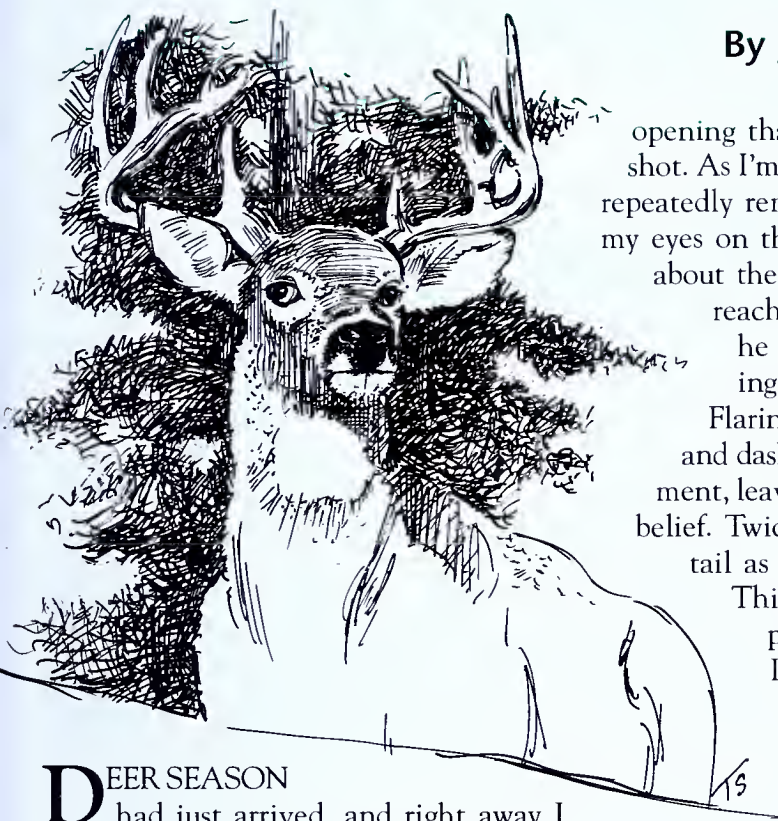
"Yeah. Guess not." I said. "Why don't you and Sherman head back to your house and wait. We have work to do here."

Deputy Gene Gaydos and I searched the area for bullet casings, blood and other evidence, and then went to the spot where Sonny and Sher had dumped the deer carcass. A brief field examination revealed that the deer, a doe, had been shot in the head with a 22-caliber bullet.

Sonny and Sher were charged with jacklighting and pled guilty before a district justice. They were each fined \$635, and both men face a mandatory 3-year revocation of their hunting and trapping privileges. □

Gift Buck of Punky Hollow

By Jerry Bush



DEER SEASON

I had just arrived, and right away I spotted a shifting, brownish-gray outline drifting through the forest. It was apparent at times, but for only a second or two. The animal would vanish when standing perfectly still, only to reappear when it moved again. The deer's natural camouflage was amazing, and now I know why whitetails are often referred to as "gray ghosts."

Suddenly, the left main beam of the deer's antlers became distinctly visible; it was a good buck, a trophy for the area of the Allegheny Mountains where I was hunting.

Punky Hollow seems to give up a trophy class animal each year, and this buck definitely qualified. Wrestling with buck fever, I raised my .270 and stared through the scope, trying desperately to locate an

opening that would allow a clear shot. As I'm in the habit of doing, I repeatedly reminded myself to keep my eyes on the kill zone and forget about the rack. Before the buck reached an opening, though, he suddenly tensed, sensing something was wrong. Flaring its nostrils, it snorted and dashed down the embankment, leaving me standing in disbelief. Twice I glimpsed its white tail as it bounded below me. Thinking about my lost opportunity, I knew where I'd be the following Saturday.

The anticipation of another encounter with the big buck provided all the incentive I needed to fend off the morning chill on Saturday. The weather conditions were drastically different from Monday's relatively warm opener. Six inches of snow now covered the ground, making it easy to spot the buck if he crossed my path again, I figured. My friend Dale was accompanying me, and as we made our way up on an old logging road we spotted an older hunter (I'm guessing he was in his late 60s) who often posted somewhere along this road every year. Seeing the old man had become part of my hunting experience.

Dale eventually wandered off to find a spot to hunt, but he returned after circling below me, to inform me



that the hunter had moved a couple hundred yards along the trail. Dale moved off and soon doubt crept in. I had thoughts about moving but, on the other hand, was determined to remain in the area. I'd missed more than one opportunity over the years because I lacked patience, but then, without warning, a deer trotted into view.

Unbelievable, it was the buck I'd seen on opening day, and he seemed totally oblivious to me. I raised my rifle and flipped off the safety. Amazingly, the buck stopped broadside, about a hundred yards away, offering a perfect shot. My crosshairs settled on the shoulder and I pulled the trigger. The deer sprang straight up and then ran to my left as I worked the bolt for a follow-up shot.

The buck stopped behind some large trees, so I held steady, waiting for him to step out. Surprisingly, though, the buck leaped to his right and bolted down the hill. It was a move I didn't anticipate. I was confident I had hit the deer in the vitals, so I figured I would wait a few minutes before taking up the trail. But then, suddenly, a shot rang out below me. Could I have missed? I quickly moved to where the buck had been standing and found an ample blood trail.

Knowing Dale was in the area — and unable to contain my emotions — I yelled, "Did you hit it, Dale?"

A resounding "No" echoed back up the hill, and I immediately yelled back that I had made a good hit and not to push the buck. Now positive the big buck was mine, I began to follow the ample blood trail in earnest.

I hadn't gone far when "here he is" drifted up to me. I hurried down and was surprised to find the elderly hunter standing next to the downed buck. Evidently the animal had circled through the thicket and wandered into an opening less than 40 yards from where he'd been standing.

I asked if it was his shot that I had heard and he confirmed that it was. He said he thought he had missed, but he must have hit the buck after all. What was going on here? I reminded him that he said he had missed, and then I pointed out the evident blood trail coming from my direction. The man's facial expression took on a look of anguish. I asked him to show me the spot where he had been standing when he shot. I was glad to learn that we had shot at opposite sides of the buck, and I had shot it through the left shoulder, so now it would

be easy to prove that I had hit the deer.

My exit wound was clearly visible, because the buck had fallen on its left side, exposing its right. My shot was a little high, but the bullet had passed through both lungs. At first glance we could not find an entry wound on the deer's right side, but a second exit wound became apparent when I flipped the deer over. The other man had, indeed, hit the deer.

I backtracked a bit, thinking perhaps I could prove the deer was shot when it was already down, but the bullet from the old man's .30-40 Krag had left clear evidence of a hit, about 20 yards up the hill from the deer. Now came the dilemma. I'm the type of hunter who would not keep a deer if I knew for certain another hunter had made a lethal shot. My years of bowhunting have converted me to the rule of "first blood," yet I realize the hunter who puts an animal down with a rifle is considered the actual owner.

The other hunter also pondered the situation. To appreciate the circumstances, you have to understand that neither of us was left with any doubt that the buck would never have cleared the trail, even without the second wound. The monarch was virtually dead on its feet and running purely on adrenaline. The man looked at me and I at him. There was strained silence and a mutual appreciation for what each of us was feeling, but then I stuck out

my right hand and congratulated the other hunter for harvesting such an outstanding trophy. He seemed puzzled at first, but then a wide smile beamed across his weathered face. I can still hear him saying, "I can't believe it! Do you mean it?"

I offered to help him drag the deer out, but he refused. "You're a good hunter and sportsman. You go get your deer now," he said. I must confess that I was incredibly disappointed at the time. I remember walking up the hill in disbelief, thinking about how well I'd hunted and how patient I'd been. The blood trail in the snow only served to fuel my self-pity.

Today, however, I have a completely different outlook on how things turned out that day. I still hunt Punky Hollow, but I've not seen the old hunter since our encounter. I miss his presence and kick myself for not getting his name. I'll always wonder if that buck was his last? I find great solace with that thought. Ten years has passed since that hunt. I like to think the trophy now adorns a wall somewhere, providing a lasting memory of what passed between us. I wish the man well, but if his spirit now moves through Punky Hollow, perhaps he will see fit to return the favor and guide a trophy buck my way. □

Books in Brief

(Not available from the Game Commission.)

Mongrel Red & The Grouse and other short stories, by George Dolnack, 899 Timberline Drive, Gap, PA 17527-9535, 77 pp., paperback, \$6.95 delivered. This book is a collection of entertaining short stories about hunting, fishing, outdoor ethics and humor by award winning outdoor writer and photographer George Dolnack. A lifelong hunter, angler and outdoorsman, the author has written about outdoor subjects and travel for more than 30 years and his work has appeared in local, state, and national magazines and newspapers.

Five Grouse

By Bob Steiner

FIVE IS WHAT I remember. Sure, there were more if you count the ones I sniped with a .22 while squirrel hunting. But I'm counting only the ones I knocked out of the air. The ones I shot when I was actually hunting them. And five is what I remember.

The first one was a surprise. The hitting, I mean. Although I had shot at many, I had never before connected on a flying grouse. We were hunting near game lands food plots, and I had taken a flying ringneck with a long straightaway shot and was feeling pretty good about myself. I had never hit many of them on the wing, either. As I worked through the briars along the edge of a food plot, I stooped to go under an overhanging hemlock limb and the grouse whirred out. It stayed low to the ground, and I dropped to one knee, shouldered the Ithaca 12-gauge and fired. The grouse tumbled to the ground. I hurried to my prize and proudly hoisted it for my hunting buddies to see. Then I remembered the shotgun I was using was my wife's, the one I had had the stock cut down to fit her. That, rather than shooting prowess, probably explained why I had hit the ringneck, too.

The following winter I exchanged a grouse hunt with a friend. He invited my wife and me to Bradford County for a day of mountainside grouse hunting in the snow, then I reciprocated by taking him and his son to the woods patches around the farms in the valley where we lived. The Bradford County hunt was rough and produced little shooting. I again carried my wife's Ithaca and she hunted with a

Remington semi-automatic 16-gauge that I had found at an estate sale. The day was great exercise for young legs in great scenery; I just don't remember any grouse.

On New Year's Day, Joe, his boy, Jake, and I headed for my local grouse patches. Once again the shooting was way short of fantastic, at least for the first couple of hours. We hadn't had a flush.

We had just come out of a thicket into a little clump of weeds when Joe spotted the rusted Packard. An antique car fancier, he started toward the old car, then realized he was in sight of a farmhouse, so he unloaded his gun and placed it against a log, barrel up out of the snow, as did Jake. I was familiar with the rusted relic from previous hunts and had already inspected it, so I just leaned against a tree, shotgun cradled in my arms, outside of the Safety Zone.

From somewhere between the brambles and the bumper of the Packard a grouse flushed. I had my back turned, but when I heard Joe holler I spun as the grouse cleared the Safety Zone and topped a stand of aspen. The Ithaca barked and the grouse tumbled. I had taken my second flying grouse.

Eventually I moved across the state and bought a few acres of woods of my own. I was happy to discover that several grouse claimed residency on the land I had title to. It was the second or third winter when I



decided that, with my shooting ability, one grouse hunt a year wouldn't hurt the local population at all.

With a fresh inch of snow and more falling, I stepped off the back porch and headed for the grapevine thicket. I had promised myself just one loop around the perimeter. I hunted through the 6-acre slashing that sprang up after a timber cut and had a flush but no shot. Two birds then flushed from a grapevine tangle and crossed the creek toward the floodplain thicket. They were over the water quickly, and not wanting to drop one in the high stream, I held my fire. I worked my way to a multi-flora rose border and had just reached a stone wall and worked up along it toward two old apple trees when a bird gave me a quick and futile shot as it busted out of the apple limbs. The scent of burnt gunpowder hung in the air for a moment, then was washed away by the softly falling snow.

I checked my watch and saw I had about a half hour of shooting time left, so I hunted along another stone wall, with its edging of red-osier dogwood. A grouse flushed too far out, then another flushed closer, and I pivoted and shot. It tumbled down at the edge of a spruce thicket. It was almost quitting time, so I unloaded the gun and headed down the hollow at a fast walk. Eight flushes, two shots and my third ever grouse.

Several years later, two young friends and I decided to hunt a grapevine tangle on a nearby game lands during the winter season. Every grouse in the county seemed to have found this patch, and we had flushes and shots all day. Two birds flushed within the first five minutes of the hunt, and I swung on the slower of the two and it hit the ground, sending up a puff of snow. The afternoon brought more shooting and Erik dumped a grouse as it tried to cross

an old logging path.

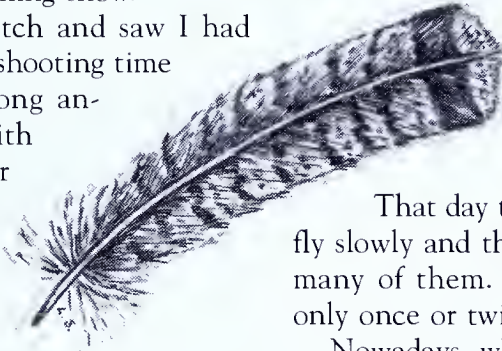
We had made the final turn and were heading for the car, some 20 shells lighter, when I saw grouse tracks in the snow. I followed them into a blowdown and the grouse blasted out the other side. Two shots nearly blended into one and the grouse went down. Bryan, who hadn't shot, said the later of the two shots connected. I picked up the grouse and put it in my game bag, emptied the Ithaca and grinned.

Erik looked at me and I explained. "You young guys keep telling me I'm old and slow. If that's the case, then you must have shot quicker than me. Bryan called the second shot a hit, so that had to be me."

Erik nodded agreement and laughed. The boys had several more misses on the way to the car. It felt strange to be walking the grouse coverts with an empty gun.

That day the grouse seemed to fly slowly and there were almost too many of them. Such luck happens only once or twice in a lifetime.

Nowadays, when I sit in front of the fireplace and sort through the grouse hunts of my nearly 40 years spent hunting, I revisit in memory all the soft falling snows, grapevine thickets, stone walls and abandoned apple orchards. I pick up the smoking hulls and savor the smell of burnt powder, see the flushes and relive the feathered explosions. In my mind I once again hang the hunting coat on the peg inside the door, wipe off the cut-down Ithaca and reach into the game pocket for a grouse to clean. I pull it out and smooth its feathers one last time. It's those days I remember most vividly. And I remember five. □



The Toughest Hunt

By Steve Martin

AS MY TIRES rolled to a stop in the camp driveway, I cut the engine and was engulfed by the dark, cold night. Now, without the car's heater, the temperature began to fall almost immediately. I stared into the darkness, contemplating my next move. It was the opening day of the late muzzleloader season, and here in northern Lycoming County it was a frigid 17 below zero. And not only was it cold now, but the daytime high was expected to reach only 10 degrees. Today's hunt would test both my physical and my mental endurance, but I still felt that overwhelming urge to head into the mountains.

It's difficult for others to understand what would draw me out on such a day, but to me it's quite simple: Nowhere else do I find such peace; nowhere else do I find such powerful medicine for the stresses and frustrations of modern living; nowhere else do I feel closer to my creator. Life is slower and simpler. My senses are heightened. Every breath is felt and every detail noticed. Each experience becomes another chapter in my life, with its memories permanently etched into my mind. Every challenge has something to teach that ultimately makes me stronger. Each day spent here provides both challenges and the opportunity to learn about the mountain and its secrets and about myself.

Rising to an elevation of 2,100 feet, the mountain beyond the cabin was steep and rugged. Nearly a foot of old

snow covered the ground. Packed and icy, it would make for a difficult climb. My plan was to slowly sneak across the upper edge of a swampy, hemlock bottom that ran along the base of the mountain. With a little luck some deer would be feeding in the bottom or seeking shelter in the hemlocks. If I didn't find any deer down low, then I'd hunt my way up the mountain to the oak and laurel benches on top. Looking at the bright side, at least the climb would warm me up.

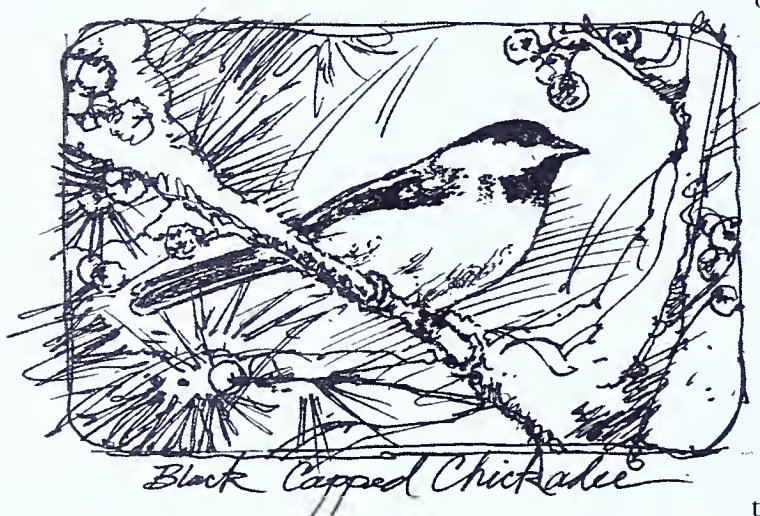
Despite the intense cold, the forecast was calling for clear skies. Even if it provided little warmth today, the sun would at least brighten my spirits. Hesitantly, I opened the car door and stepped into the stinging cold. Taking my first breath, I could feel the moisture inside my nose freeze as the frigid air sank into my lungs. I pulled my scarf up higher over my chin and neck, and then my collar up and my heavy knit cap down to meet it, but still the cold penetrated my clothes and I shivered. I was thankful I had loaded the barrel of my 50-caliber Hawkin before I had left home, so all I needed to do was prime the pan and get moving.

Leaving the security of my car and the cabin behind, I headed for the base of the mountain. Due to the crunchy snow it would be difficult to move quietly, but the still air would keep my scent from dispersing too much. All animals make noise when moving in the woods, so I'm always more concerned with my scent spooking deer than with crunchy snow or dry leaves. I have always hunted slowly and patiently, trying to imitate the stop-and-go move-



ments of wildlife, not the steady, consistent footsteps of a human. I have always limited myself to close, high percentage shots, and even under today's conditions, I would settle for nothing less.

Climbing to the upper edge of the hemlocks, I slowly hunted parallel to the swampy bottom. I stopped often to look and listen. All was quiet except for the buzzing chatter of a small group of black-capped chickadees playfully fluttering in the hemlocks around me. Always curious and playful, the chickadees seemed to be following me this morning. I was thankful for their company.



After covering nearly a half mile I was approaching the end of the hemlocks when I encountered two sets of old, frozen deer tracks. With this being about the only deer sign I had seen, it was clear that the deer were spending little time down low, so my only option was to climb.

All too quickly the gentle slope above the hemlock bottom turned steep and the frigid air burned my lungs. Despite the physical exertion of the climb, my toes and fingers tingled from the cold, while ice formed on my beard and mustache. At one point the mountainside was so steep that I could

hardly climb without holding onto trees. Reaching a small bench, I paused to catch my breath. From my vantage point the view was remarkable. Below me, Little Pine Creek sparkled like a jewel in the morning sun. Snow covered slopes followed its path on both sides. Had anyone, I wondered, ever taken in the same view from this same tiny mountain bench? I felt privileged and filed away one more memory.

Continuing my climb I began to notice more and fresher deer tracks. Also, the snow was becoming more powdery. Colder temperatures at this higher elevation had never allowed any melting and crusting to occur. Although the snow was at least a week old, it had the look and consistency

of a fresh snowfall. The entire landscape sparkled in the sun as I approached nearer to the top of the mountain. Almost like a storybook scene, everything glistened in the morning sunshine. Never before had I seen such frosting, but never before had I been out in such cold temperatures.

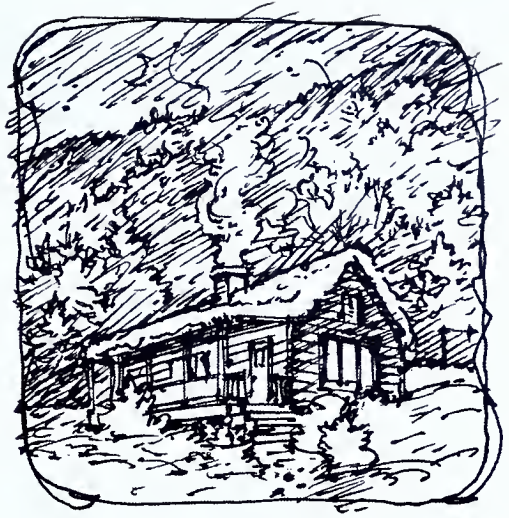
Looking down I noticed three fresh sets of deer tracks heading out the bench to my right, weaving between the trees and scattered laurel. Suddenly, I didn't feel quite so cold as I checked the priming powder in my flash pan. Ever so slowly, I inched my way forward with all of my senses on full alert. After a short distance I came to a point and the tracks continued up over a small rise, then back along a broad oak and laurel bench just below the summit. On the lower side of the bench the mountain dropped off sharply, and being the south side, the sun was bright. With the temperature still well below zero, I guessed the deer would bed down on this sunny side. Patiently, I scanned every square foot of the bench for any patches of brown, any horizontal lines that could be

a deer's back, the coal black of a deer's nose, or any sign of movement, but all was quiet.

Suddenly, about 75 yards out the bench, I detected slight movement and spotted the distinctive brown of a deer's dark winter coat. With its head down, the deer slowly fed through the sun-washed laurel. Although I had shot comfortably at this distance on the range, I wanted to get closer. Partly obscured by tree trunks and laurel, the deer continued to feed, quartering away from me as I scanned the laurel for other deer. Just beyond the first deer I spotted the twitching tail of another, and then, on the down slope side of the bench, another patch of hair appeared among some quivering laurel branches. Although I had yet to positively identify any of the three deer, the tracks that I had been following appeared to be those of a large doe and two fawns. With all three deer feeding comfortably, now was my chance to move.

My heart began to beat faster as I moved forward ever so carefully. With my knees and waist slightly bent, I tried to keep a low profile and avoid as much contact as possible with the frozen, brittle, laurel. After covering approximately 25 yards, I knelt down in the snow to calm myself and listen. Hearing nothing, I decided to chance a peek. With a large red oak at my side, I rose ever so slowly. Much to my disappointment, I couldn't see any of them. How could they have disappeared so soon? Had they moved down off the bench onto the steep side? Had they moved into a dip or thicker laurel? Had they bedded down? Despite the fact that it was nearly 10 o'clock it was still bitterly cold.

Trying to maintain my concentration, I carefully stalked toward the last place I had seen the deer. If nothing else, at least their tracks would give me a clue as to what had happened to them. The snow-covered ground was interlaced with fresh deer tracks. Based on the number of tracks, it looked like the three deer that I had been following were now in the company of oth-



ers. My heart began to beat faster as I could sense that something was about to happen. Whether it was that sixth sense hunters sometimes get, or just a gut feeling from being in this situation before, I don't know, but somehow I could feel it.

Suddenly, movement to my left caught my attention. A deer, bedded in a fallen treetop not 30 yards away, was reaching up and nipping browse as it lay in its bed. Instinctively, I pulled the hammer to full cock as I raised the rifle to my shoulder and set the rear trigger. Although the deer's body was partly covered by the treetop, I had a clear shot at its neck. Lining up the iron sights, I touched the front trigger. With a flash and a boom the rifle coughed its thick, sulfur smelling smoke into the air, blocking my vision. Through the smoke, though, I saw the deer explode from the fallen treetop. Like a tiny eruption, snow was spewed into the air and branches sprang to life as the deer bounded for the ridgeline. I watched in disappointment while snow crystals, floating back down to the ground, sparkled in the sunshine. Behind me, at least two other deer could be heard crashing down over the steep mountainside.

With heart pounding, I reached into my pocket for the small medicine

vial that held a pre-measured charge of black powder. Making a funnel around the muzzle with my hand, I poured the powder down the barrel. Quickly, a pre-lubed patch was laid over the muzzle and the round lead ball laid on the patch. Two quick hard taps with the ball starter, and then I firmly seated the ball against the powder charge with the ramrod. Sliding the ramrod back into the brass, barrel-shaped holders beneath the barrel, I quickly primed the pan and closed the cover. Now I was ready for a follow-up shot.

I searched for any sign of a hit as I approached the fallen treetop. No blood or hair could be found, just churned-up snow where the deer had bolted from the treetop and a line of tracks angling toward the ridgeline. It seemed I had missed, but I took up the track to be sure. Slowly, I stalked towards the ridgeline, following the tracks and searching for any sign of a hit. As the tracks approached the ridgeline, the deer had slowed to a walk, but there was no sign of a hit. Again, I felt that sixth sense and checked my priming powder. Slowly, I eased up over the ridgeline and paused. The tracks snaked into a thicker area with scattered small white pines.

Without so much as a sound a deer suddenly moved from within the pines

and headed towards me along the same set of tracks I had been following. In one fluid movement I pulled the hammer to full-cock, lined the iron sights on the deer's chest and set the rear trigger. Emerging from the pines, the deer stopped at no more than 20 yards and looked right at me as I touched the front trigger. Again the rifle flashed, cracked and belched its white sulfur smoke. And this time, the deer collapsed in its tracks.

Kneeling down beside the young buck, I stroked his dark, thick coat and offered a prayer of thanks. Filled with mixed emotions, I reflected upon the events of the day and the beautiful animal that lay before me. I had endured the challenge of a bitterly cold day and cleanly taken a deer with a primitive firearm that I had made myself. I felt a great sense of pride and accomplishment.

With the tagging and field-dressing chores complete, I attached my drag rope to the deer and looked down onto the broad mountain bench below. In the bright sunlight, the white powdery snow contrasted sharply against the dark green laurel. The heavy crystalline frost that still coated nearly everything sparkled in the sun. Wild snow-covered ridges stretched to the horizon against a deep blue, cloudless sky. Not a hint of civilization could be seen or heard. As I absorbed the beautiful scenery before me and drew a deep breath of the cold air, it was crystal clear why I would go out on a day like this. □

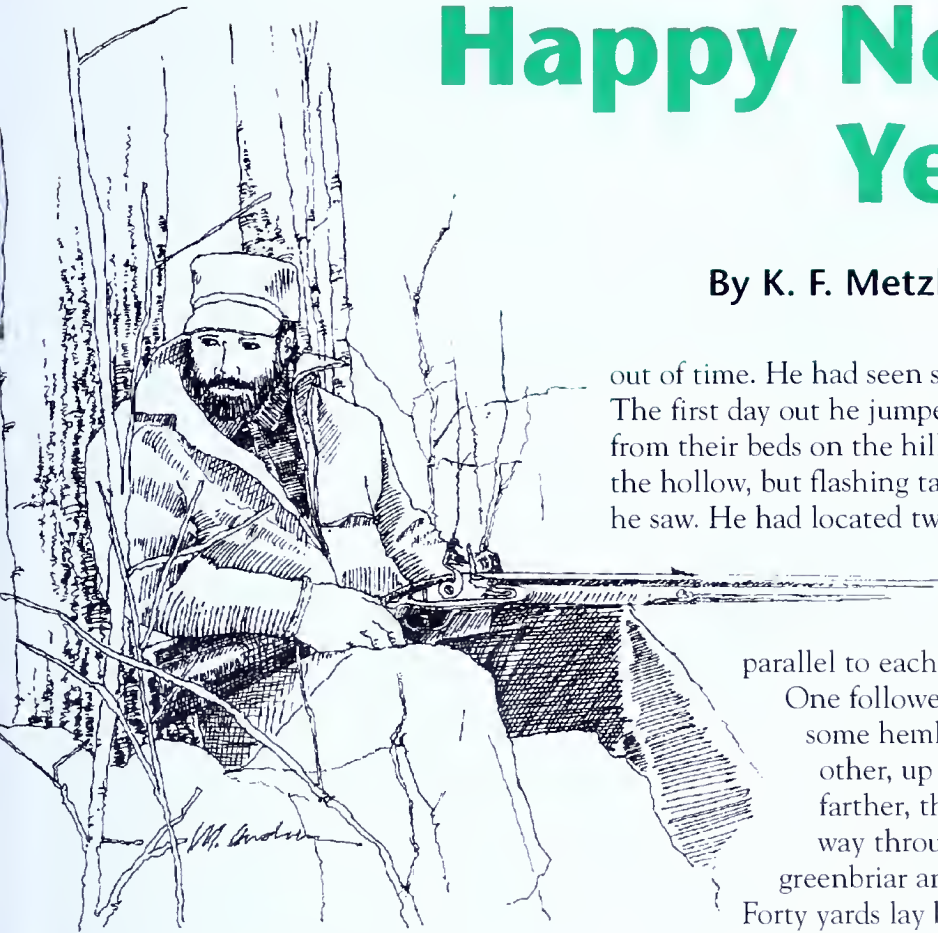
Books in Brief

(Not available from the Game Commission.)

Season's Belle, A Labrador Retriever's First Year, by Bob Butz, Countrysport Press, P.O. Box 679, Camden, ME 04843, 96 pp., \$30 plus \$4.50 shipping & handling. Bob Butz, a fine outdoor writer — and occasional *Game News* contributor — and bird hunter, purchased a Lab pup named Belle in the fall of 2000. This book, with 150 full-color photographs by nationally recognized retriever photographer Lee Thomas Kjos, takes the reader through Belle's first year, season by season. You'll watch Belle's progress toward becoming not just a first class gun dog, but an outstanding companion, too.

Happy New Year

By K. F. Metzler



ON THE FLOOD PLAIN of the Conemaugh there is a small valley where Aultman Run flows. This valley was once farmland, then stripped for coal, and then cordoned off by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. It's a peaceful place, especially when the days shorten and the snow falls. It's also a good place to hunt.

The snow was no more than three inches deep, and Luke followed boot prints he recognized as his own. The midday sun could warm only enough to soften the old tread patterns, before the rays angled off and the frigid wind would harden them again. He had been up and down, over and across, this piece of woods for what today would be six days straight. Luke was looking for deer. A buck would be great, but a big doe would do now. He'd had the whole last week of December to hunt, but he was running

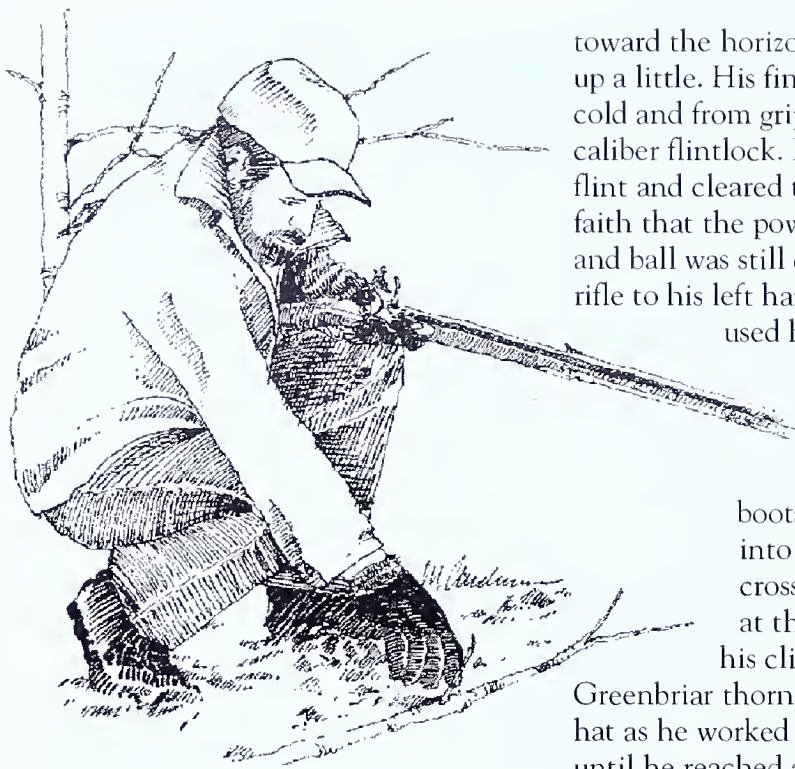
out of time. He had seen some deer. The first day out he jumped a bunch from their beds on the hillside across the hollow, but flashing tails was all he saw. He had located two good

trails that ran parallel to each other.

One followed along some hemlocks, the other, up the hill farther, threaded its way through greenbriar and locusts.

Forty yards lay between them, and unable to decide which trail was more promising, he set up in the middle to watch both. His outline was well broken by a downed apple tree, which also provided a rest for the long barrel of his flintlock. After a considerable wait he thought he might relieve his cold feet by getting them up off the ground just a little. To do this, he stepped up on small log, and as he did so, a fat doe trotted into the open on the upper trail, saw the movement, switched ends and was gone.

One bitter cold day during the middle of the week he had watched squirrels and wondered if he should be hunting for them and grouse instead of deer. He stuck to his stand in a crabapple thicket, watching deer legs beneath the branches until it was too dark to do anything. That



night as he walked out of the trees he spotted more deer in an open meadow along the creek bottom, and he watched them slip back into the woods.

The following day Luke was out early. Leaning against a hickory tree back in from the meadow, he waited in hopes of intercepting deer going from their feeding to bedding areas. He didn't see any, but he was there to see the sunrise and a flock of ducks sail through the hollow, probably heading for one of the deeper pools at a bend in the stream. Luke decided to continue his watch. Perhaps deer would move through these hickories before nightfall. Again he was disappointed, though, and to add to his bad luck, as he trudged back to the truck after shooting hours, a deer stood broadside in the open just off the trail.

On the last day of his vacation — the last day of December — he hunted most of the day without seeing a deer. The sun was sliding

toward the horizon and the wind picked up a little. His fingers were stiff from the cold and from gripping the heavy .50-caliber flintlock. He had rechecked his flint and cleared the touch hole, and had faith that the powder beneath the patch and ball was still dry. He switched the rifle to his left hand as he walked and used his right to lift the collar of the Woolrich up around his ears. The snow crunched under his boots as he trudged down into the hollow, cautiously crossed the shallow stream at the bottom, and began his climb up the other side.

Greenbriar thorns tugged at his coat and hat as he worked his way through them until he reached a crabapple thicket. His plan was to go through the crabapples into mature woods, and just at the edge of the timber, pick a vantage point where he would be able to spot any deer in the thicket searching for any apples remaining under the snow.

The climb was difficult, but this route was the most direct and allowed him to approach his stand with the wind in his face and the slope directing any sound of his approach away from deer bedded farther out along the ridge. He found a spot at the base of a maple where he could rest his back and watch out in front as well as down through the apple trees. He got comfortable, made sure he could raise the rifle easily, and then filled the flash pan. As was his practice he also pulled off his right glove, pushed it into his pocket and slid his bare hand between the buttons of his coat.

Waiting, he searched the area in front of him and listened for sounds that would alert him to approaching deer. A rustle behind him drew his attention, and after a cautious wait, he slowly turned to investigate. The branch of an oak still held a cluster of dried leaves,

and a change in wind direction would move them, making a sound much like deer scratching for food.

Daylight was fading fast and a dog began to bark in the distance, and it seemed all Luke could hear was the dog, the wind and those oak leaves, but then he heard a thump.

Maybe he'd imagined it, he thought. What was that sound? Finally he gave in to curiosity and turned to look. Down the hill about 30 yards a deer stood in a tangle of grapevines, its head lowered as it pawed the ground. Fifteen minutes of shooting remained when he raised the rifle and aligned the sights on the deer's shoulder. With the touch of the trigger, flint struck steel and fire and smoke erupted from the barrel. When the smoke cleared the deer was gone.

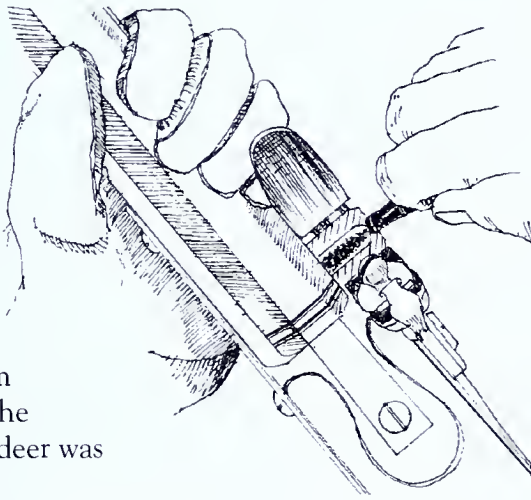
Getting to his feet Luke went to where it had stood, and found a patch of blood. Running out of time, he reloaded and took up the track. The blood trail was light but consistent, and led through the thickest part of vines and brush. To follow he tried crawling under, but finally decided to break out and circle the worst of it. He picked up the trail at the other end and followed downhill where it made a hard turn and crossed a small opening, and then ran into more greenbriar and a stand of sumac.

The blood trail petered out, so he tied a handkerchief to a sapling next to the last red stain in the snow and then

branched out in widening circles. He went back to the handkerchief and then noticed a log not far away that looked like an inviting spot to sit and rest for a minute. When he got there he was startled to discover the deer just on the other side; it was a spike buck. Because he had an unfilled buck tag and an antlerless deer license, he hadn't even looked for antlers when he shot the deer. He dumped his priming powder and set the rifle aside, then gave thanks for having found the deer. After tagging and field-dressing the deer only a long drag remained.

It was well after dark when he reached his truck, and he stowed his rifle and the rest of his gear by moonlight. He crawled into the cab to refresh himself with a cup of

warm tea, but being exhausted, he dozed off. When the cold woke him his first thought was of the buck, and he rolled from the pickup and struggled it into the truck bed. He looked at his watch, noticing it was near midnight, so he sat on the tailgate and waited. The bright moon in the mottled sky was peaceful, and he was in no hurry now. He sat waiting and remembering the events of the week and this day, and then checked the time again. Happy New Year, he thought, and the past year had been a good one, too. □



Deer Tour 2002

By Mark Hogan

A LITTLE MORE than a year ago I wrote about a group of us who discuss hunting related subjects on a website message board going on a tour of SGL 44, led by LMO John Dzemyan and WCO Dick Bodenhorn. We all gained a lot on that outing, especially in seeing the dramatic difference in vegetation inside and outside of deer enclosures.

After that tour we wanted to see what a known deer density would do to the habitat. Several phone calls and e-mails finally paid off when DCNR biologist J. Merlin Benner agreed to lead an event on the Tioga State Forest near Blackwell.

Fifteen of us met at 8 p.m. on September 13 for the first part of the tour. We split into two groups and each group traveled approximately 15 miles, with three recorders in each group keeping track of the number of deer seen by spotlighting. The three separate recorders in my group recorded 58, 60 and 61 deer. That's pretty close, considering many were bedded and only the eyes were visible. We recorded the 60 deer from my car. That included 26 does, 19 unknown, 13 fawns and 2 small bucks. The deer appeared healthy, and we suspect

many more deer were not visible because they were bedding in the high fields. The other group saw 88 deer: 60 does, 14 bucks and 14 fawns.

The next morning, 27 of us met at the Hills Creek State Park visitors center. Mr. Benner first told us how surveys like we had done are good population and health indicators if done consistently and over long periods of time. Merlin also brought Jon Felton, a private landowner who had been practicing "quality deer management" on his 500 acres since 1995.

Felton learned as he went, like many of us, and is now seeing the rewards from concentrating on doe harvests and protecting young bucks. Felton also showed us some photos, one of which was of a group of five nice bucks taken last summer. Felton believes that it's impossible to over-harvest does. He says that the desired regeneration is now taking place and the improved health of the herd can be easily seen since he's increased the doe harvest on his property.

Approximately 20 of us continued on for phase three of the trip, a 30-mile drive through the Tioga State Forest to Blackwell. We saw a lot of over-browsed forest from our vehicles, and we hiked back in to two sites. The first site was a 40-acre clearcut that had an electric fence installed

HUNTERS SHARING THE HARVEST

Hunters are reminded to consider donating excess venison to Hunters Sharing the Harvest (HSH). The program has been channeling donations to local food banks and soup kitchens since 1991. Food banks say that meat from just one deer can feed 200 people, and each year, HSH helps provide 200,000 meals.

Those who don't have any meat to spare can help by contributing to the "Give a Buck for the Pot" campaign, which helps butchers cover the costs of processing. To find out more about the program, and a list of participating processors, visit the Game Commission's web site at www.pgc.state.pa.us, and select "Hunting Information."

to keep out deer. Many deer have figured out how to gain entry, though.

Merlin said that about 10 years ago the damage was so severe that the deer population dropped to less than five deer per square mile in many areas. Hunter success fell, too, and as a result, the hunting pressure dropped off and has remained low. The regeneration improved, and the deer density in that area is now around 12 deer per square mile. This reduced hunting pressure has allowed the bucks to get older. We discussed last fall's large acorn crop, the mild winter, and how healthier deer and a large fawn crop had resulted.

Merlin expressed how grateful he is that the Game Commission is working to balance the deer herds with the habitat. He hopes that they will soon help direct hunting pressure to state forests and, in turn,

curb the damage large deer herds are doing. The last area we visited had a deer density of 54 deer per square mile, based on a recent pellet count.

Merlin spoke of how habitat measurements, such as white-tailed deer food preferences, may one day be used to help determine antlerless deer license allocations.

We finished with questions, and Merlin answered them all. We thanked him for his efforts and willingness to spend a weekend helping us learn more about deer management.

The final event was a picnic at the campsite. Many friendships were made and renewed. Several asked where we might go for a deer tour next year. It looks like we might have a new tradition growing here, too. □

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Here's the details on the Game Commission's new

Wildlife Management Units

. . . built from the ground up.

**By Dr. Christopher S. Rosenberry
and Dr. Matthew J. Lovallo**

PGC Wildlife Biologists

WILDLIFE POPULATIONS are not equally distributed or abundant across Pennsylvania. That's why management areas are used to manage wildlife. Today we have management units for deer, bear, turkey, pheasants, quail, furbearers and others.

There are several problems with our current approach, however, because units are based on county boundaries and the units are different for each species — except furbearers.

First, county boundaries are not usually recognizable in the field.

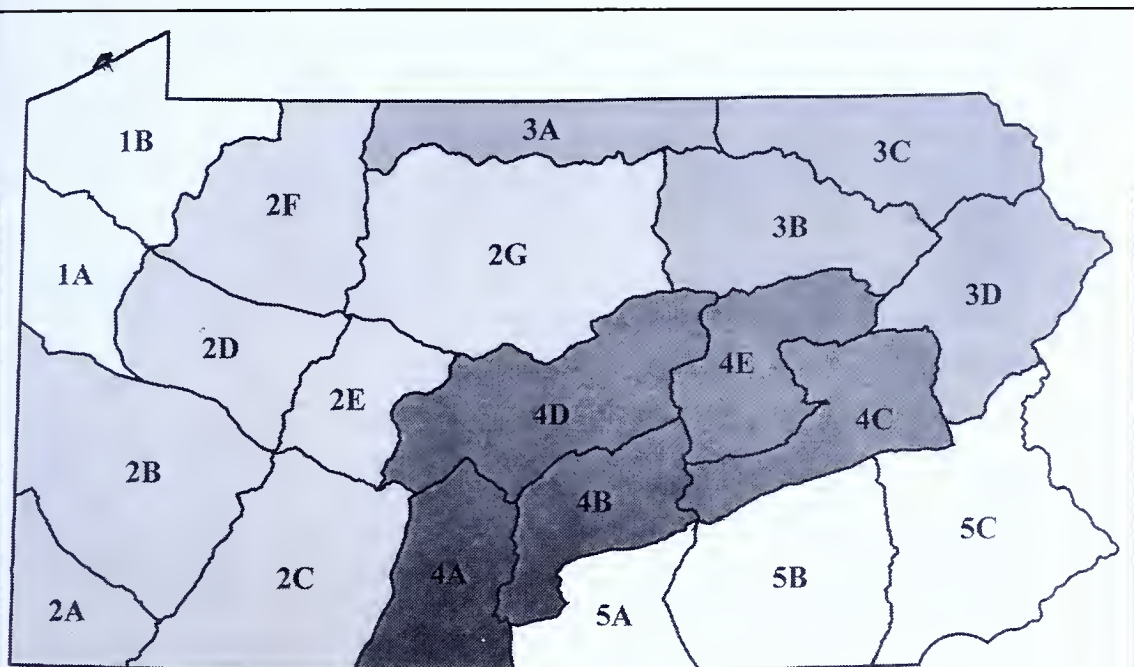
Second, being political subdivisions, county boundaries usually have nothing to do with wildlife populations. Northern Dauphin County, for example, is a mix of agricultural valleys and forested mountains containing large tracts of public land. Southern Dauphin County, on the other hand, is made up largely of Harrisburg and surrounding suburbs. Yet when managing wildlife

based on counties, these two different areas are treated the same.

Finally, having different units for different species creates confusion for hunters and trappers. For example, the way things are now, a hunter in Centre County may be in six different species-specific management units.

In addition to those problems, many management units have been changed or considered for change in recent years. As most deer hunters know, new deer management units have been proposed for several years. Our turkey management plan stipulates that turkey management areas be regularly reviewed and, if necessary, updated. And just this year, a new bear unit was created, to accommodate the one-week season in the northeast.

With so many changes and potential changes, we took a look at all our management units, and as a result, developed a system that will allow us to use consistent management units for all game (except elk and waterfowl) and furbearers. The new units are based on habitat, human-related, and wildlife population



THE GAME COMMISSION'S new Wildlife Management Units will help eliminate the confusion and problems inherent with our current, political approach. The 21 new units are divided by highways, traffic routes and rivers, and were created from five different physiographic regions. The actual units were determined by the amount of forest land, public-owned land and human related characteristics.

characteristics; they have recognizable physical boundaries; and provide sufficient data to make sound management decisions.

Our new Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) system was built from the ground up. The new units are not an updated version of any current or proposed species management unit system.

Initially, we divided the state into five, large physiographic areas with similar geology, elevation, soils, vegetation and climate. The Ridge and Valley (WMUs 4A-E) and Piedmont (WMUs 5A-C) physiographic provinces accounted for two of these large units. The Appalachian Plateaus were divided into three units. Northeastern (WMUs 3A-D) and northwestern (WMUs 1A-B) glaciated areas each formed a large unit, and the remaining areas were grouped into one physiographic unit (WMUs 2A-G). These five physiographic units were then subdivided into what turned out to be 21 WMUs.

For this step, we looked at the amount of forest land, public-owned land, and human population densities. The combination of physiographic, habitat and human-related characteristics clearly differentiates most WMUs (Table 1). WMUs 5B and 5C are the exception. These WMUs are similar, but we separated the more agricultural 5B from the more urban 5C.

To delineate WMU borders, we used, in order of preference, interstate highways, U. S. traffic routes, state routes, and rivers. Preference was based on feature size and how easily recognizable it is. Throughout the process, when deciding whether to split or group potential units, we had to keep in mind whether or not we had or could obtain adequate data to manage wildlife.

The system of 21 WMUs provides more (smaller) management units

for every species except deer. Under the current, county-based deer management system, the 67 counties are grouped into 31 groups for data analysis. So, in practice, for deer we're really going from 31 units (not 67) to 21.

For identifying WMUs we used a 2-digit code. The number represents the large physiographic unit to which the WMU belongs. For example, WMUs 4A through E compose the Ridge and Valley Unit. The letter represents the specific WMU within the physiographic unit. We chose letters, rather than numbers, because letters would allow us to create, if necessary, more than ten WMUs

within a physiographic without having to go to a 3-digit code.

These new WMUs will form the basis for our 2003-04 seasons and bag limit proposals at the January 2003 meeting of the Board of Commissioners.

While developing these new units, several questions and concerns were brought up.

Units are too big

WMUs provide smaller management units for all species but deer, and whether smaller management units would improve deer management is arguable. The ability to make management decisions based on adequate data should be the basis for all deer management.

TABLE 1. WMUs WITH PHYSIOGRAPHIC UNIT IDENTITY AND LEVELS OF FOREST, PUBLIC-OWNED LAND, AND HUMAN DENSITY.

WMU	Physiographic Unit	Forest	Public-Owned Land	Human Density
1A	NW Glaciated Plateau	Low	Low	Medium-High
1B	NW Glaciated Plateau	Medium	Low/Medium	Medium-High
2A	Appalachian Plateaus	Medium	Low	Medium
2B	Appalachian Plateaus	Medium	Low	High
2C	Appalachian Plateaus	Medium	Medium	Low-Medium
2D	Appalachian Plateaus	Medium	Low	Medium
2E	Appalachian Plateaus	Medium	Medium	Medium
2F	Appalachian Plateaus	High	High	Medium
2G	Appalachian Plateaus	High	High	Low
3A	NE Glaciated Plateaus	High	Medium	Low
3B	NE Glaciated Plateaus	Medium/High	Medium/High	Medium
3C	NE Glaciated Plateaus	Medium	Low/Medium	Low-High
3D	NE Glaciated Plateaus	High	Medium/High	Medium
4A	Ridge and Valley	Medium	Medium	Low/Medium
4B	Ridge and Valley	Medium	Medium	Low-High
4C	Ridge and Valley	Medium	Medium	Medium
4D	Ridge and Valley	Medium	High	Medium
4E	Ridge and Valley	Medium	Low	High
5A	Piedmont	Low-High	Low-High	Medium
5B	Piedmont	Low	Low	High
5C	Piedmont	Low	Low	High

Twenty-one WMUs will improve precision of and increase confidence in estimates by increasing sample sizes within each unit. If smaller WMUs were desired, then additional data collection would be necessary, and this would require more personnel and other resources than we have.

We recognize there will be deer related problems on a smaller scale than can be addressed within the WMU system. For this reason, the Deer Management Section is proposing a Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP) to provide assistance to local areas. DMAP is a separate program and should not be construed as subunits within the WMU system.

How will antlerless licenses be issued?

This is the most significant problem to be solved. By law, antlerless licenses must be issued through county treasurers, but our new WMUs do not adhere to county boundaries. Working with legislators and county treasurers a procedure was developed through which hunters will send antlerless deer license applications to a specific address for each WMU. The PGC in Harrisburg will receive them and then distribute the applications to

county treasurers for issuing. The number of licenses county treasurers will issue will be based on the county's portion of a WMU. For example, if Dauphin County constitutes 25 percent of WMU 4C, then the Dauphin county treasurer would issue 25 percent of the antlerless licenses allocated to WMU 4C.

Are waterfowl and elk included?

No. Waterfowl are not included in WMUs because the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service sets seasons, bag limits and management unit boundaries for waterfowl. Waterfowl seasons, bag limits and management units are also distributed in a brochure separate from the PGC's Hunting and Trapping Digest. Elk were not included because they are confined to a local area and elk units are too small to be of practical use for other species.

The development of new management units that will cover virtually all game and furbearers will eliminate the confusion of having several different management unit systems and enable us to improve our management programs. □

Books in Brief

(Not available from the Game Commission.)

Quality Venison III, All New Wild Game Recipes and Hunting Tales Too, by Steve and Gale Loder, Loder's Publications, Inc., P.O. Box, 1615, Cranberry Twp., PA 16066. \$14.95, plus \$3.50 s&h; PA residents add \$1.11 in state sales tax. Quality Venison III features 100 newly created — and taste-tested wild game recipes, and as users of Quality Venison I and II know, the Loders' recipes are not only imaginative and delicious, they're also easy to prepare, with ingredients found in about any kitchen. A section on "The Other Wild Game" is full of interesting recipes that will help you get the most from your rabbits, squirrels, waterfowl, and other small game. This book, again like the others, also includes more than two dozen hunting stories. If you want to expand on your wild game cooking, Quality Venison III is a good place to start.

THE PRELUDE TO THIS article is this month's cover painting that I have titled "In the Hollow." When deciding what to paint, I

PORTRAIT OF A WHITETAIL

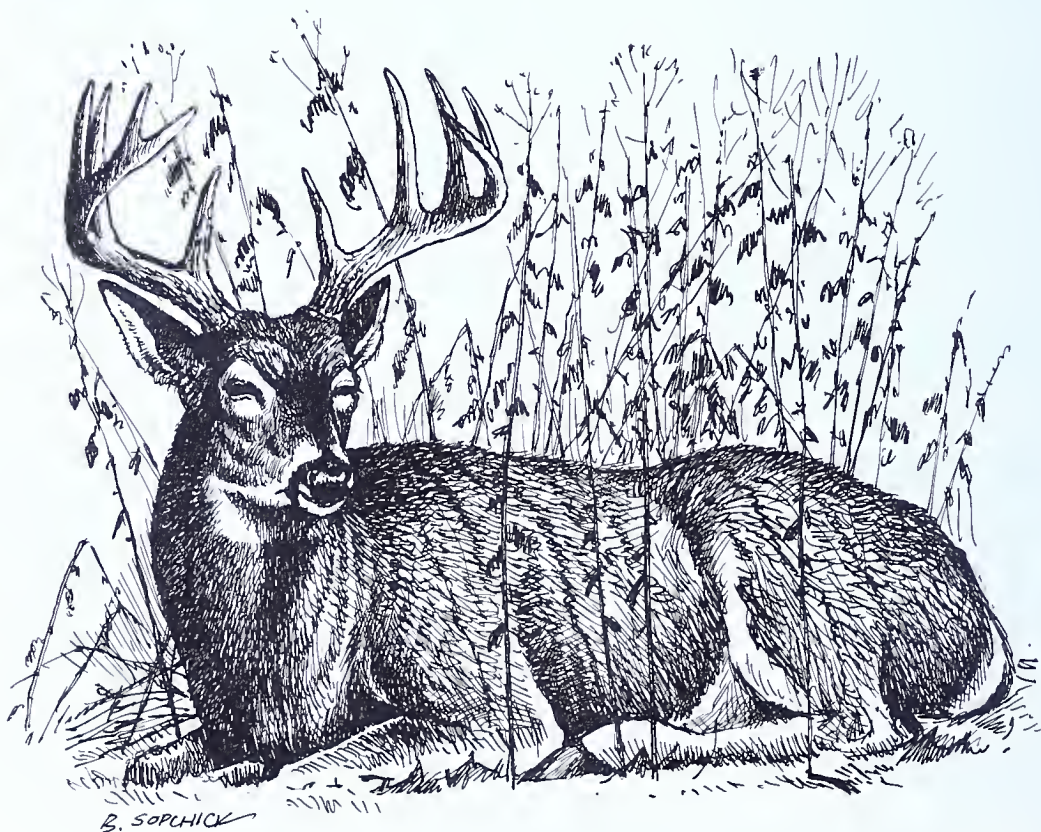
Penn's Woods Sketchbook by Bob Sopchick

thought that I would recreate a snowy image salvaged from boyhood dreams of what I always hoped to see the first day of deer season, an image I'm sure that is shared by hunters everywhere, and one I have witnessed many times since.

Gifford Pinchot, conservationist and Governor of Pennsylvania, once said, "The vast possibilities of our great future will become realities only if we make ourselves responsible for that future." Deer hunting, beside being fun, has always been a vital and responsible part of conservation. Hunters can be proud of that.

At the same time, though, hunters must continue to think of what is best for deer and the deer woods beyond the context of our lives. This may be difficult to do, because it is human nature to dwell in the present, but it is, nevertheless, our responsibility when participating in a pursuit as timeless as deer hunting.

The welfare of the herd and environment has been the responsibility of hunters since earliest times, ever since hoofed animals were followed and culled, and remains a legacy passed down from those ancient hunters. When we leave the woods for the last time, we should be able to look back knowing that we have done our part, our best, to ensure that the image on this month's cover exists beyond memory, and will forever be a part of Penn's Woods.



WINTER ARRIVES in the uplands like the easy turning of a quilt; the busy, brilliant patchwork of crimson and gold replaced by subtler hues of blue-violet and grays and faded umbers. Several inches of fresh snow unites the varied features of the woods; fields and laurel flats, oak groves and boulder fields, deep hollows and birch thickets, all share the same white cover.

Winter birds settle into their niches in the retiring landscape. Skeins of chickadees and nuthatches glean bark for insect protein. Wild turkeys feed along a seep, as a ruffed grouse plucks aspen buds. Ravens course up and down the hollow; venerable sentinels of winter, they see all.

A snowshoe hare stands on tiptoes to listen better to a coyote moving through the rhododendron. In a mountaintop swamp a black bear is curled up within a leafy nest in a half shell of a stump, protected from the elements by several inches of fat, its thick winter coat, and a blanket of snow. A bobcat yawns and stretches and rakes a log while a gray squirrel sits on a high limb in a spot of sunlight, warming up to the new day.

At daybreak, a buck walks slowly along an overgrown tram road on a steep sidehill. He paws for acorns along the way, nips the grass at the edge of the road. The road terminates in a tabletop size patch of weeds where the buck beds down. From this vantage point it is easy to detect danger from below. His sharp outline is interrupted by the vertical lines of the weeds, and his coat is striped with thin shadows. Perfectly camouflaged, he appears to be little more than a rock surrounded by weeds.

The buck squints into the light of the new day, chewing his cud. Even at rest his ears swivel about; this is the idling “sleep” of ruminants. The rigors of the rut have taken a toll on the buck, and like a battleship returned from a long campaign, he is firmly anchored in the safe harbor of winter. In his brief life he has known only mild winters and banner mast crops.

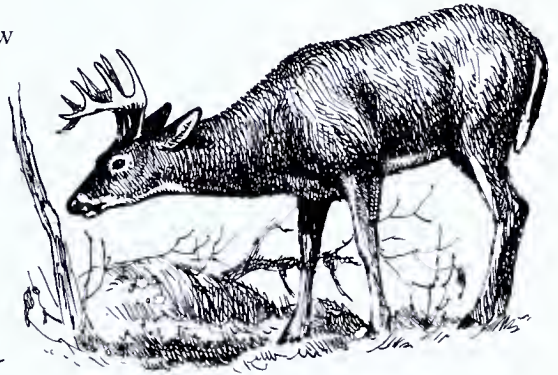
He rests the left beam of his heavy 10-point rack onto his side and closes his eyes.

The buck is a marvel of design. He is, in effect, a transmutation of the landscape itself, made visible in a beautiful living thing of muscle and bone with a wild spirit bent on surviving, wild as that wind that rushes all the harder in a storm of winds, of that light that shines brightest within a flood of light.

His sweeping antlers echo the arc of the oak branches that lend him the fruit of life, and the cryptic marks on the long tines reveal the story of this autumn past. The polished burrs of the antlers are stained from the resins of saplings, and the pale main beams display nicks and scratches and the deeper clefts of battle.

Highlights within his large eyes swim and fan like native trout in a dark mountain pool; eyes that take in every bit of ambient light, enabling him to run full bore through the woods under the faintest starlight. His moist nose drinks in complex rivers of scent, each nuance separated one from the other; defined, evaluated, catalogued.

From a distance a deer’s winter coat appears to be brown, but upon closer investigation it is comprised of a complex stippling of black and white and umber and ochre and sienna and gray. Darker hairs along his spine graduate to a white belly, a counter shading, so that when he stands stock still in the filtered light of the forest he shows no form, but appears flat and without dimension, not a living thing at all.



Folded beneath his resting body are legs like steel springs, and he can fly from his bed at the slightest danger, sprinting down the mountain, sailing in 15-foot leaps. Depending on the circumstance, the buck would rather slink quietly away, tail tucked down tight or, better yet, to simply lie motionless until danger passes.

The buck lost much weight during the rut, but deer convert acorns to fat quickly, and he recovers some of that weight from the bounty of a heavy mast crop. The pressures of hunting season have had little effect on the buck in this mountainous, rugged territory. During the last three hunting seasons he has found refuge on the steepest slope of this mountain where few hunters tread, and has grown to maturity.

BACKTRACKING TO MID-NOVEMBER finds the 4½-year-old buck at the apogee of his prime. The rut is the focal point of his year, of his life, his very reason for being. The flow of nature is to bloom and die, and within that cycle the role of the mature buck is to hold fast to his position as a dominant breeding buck, while keeping subordinate bucks in check. This he does well.

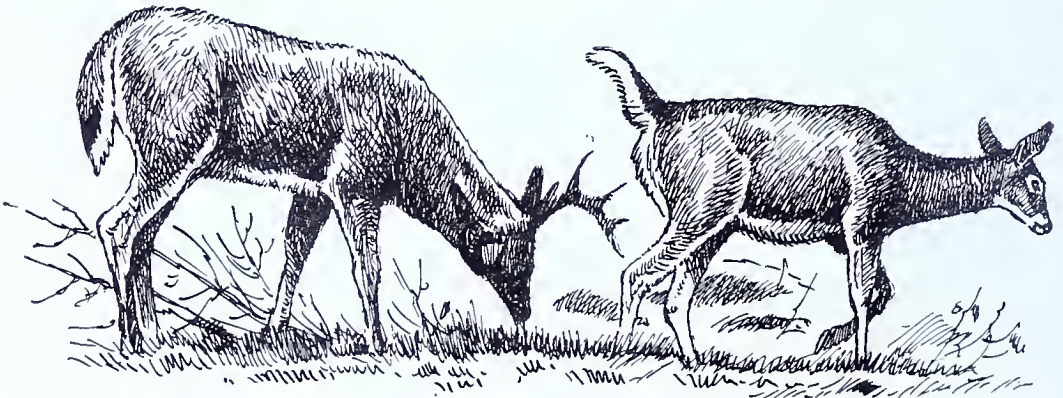
There is a palpable tension in the air, as the uplands are about to erupt with the frenzy of the rut. Even though the rut appears to be a time of chaos, with deer running all about, it is a precise, concentrated activity with most breeding taking place within a few days. This flurry of activity not only protects the preoccupied deer, but also ensures that most of the fawns will be born at the same time. From wildebeest to whitetail, more young will survive predation when they are born within days of each other.

At first light the bull-necked buck plods up a saddle on the ridge. No breeze stirs the leafy carpet, nor any sound save the steady cadence of his footfalls. The buck is about to cross a tram road when he hears the tending grunt of a rival buck. He circles around to the source of the sound, ears forward, nostrils wide open. Ever cautious, he stops and drinks the air, then peels down past some boulders and stops again.

An archer releases his shaft, but the arrow glances off an unseen grapevine, and plows into the leaves beneath the deer. The buck spins and runs for cover. Later that morning the archer takes a doe, wondering where the big buck had come from.

The buck loiters in the laurel, then heads up to the flat on the mountaintop. He crosses several parallel deer trails when he slams into the trail of an estrous doe, and the great chase is on. The buck is on the move night and day, ranging far and wide, breeding does, guided by his nose that leads him along the chemical highways crisscrossing the uplands. Finally, like a wave washing over the mountain, the peak of the rut passes, and the buck returns to a secretive, mostly nocturnal life.

Although he is the dominant buck in this range, he once met his match the previ-



ous autumn. It was there along that fringe where their territories overlapped that he happened upon an unfamiliar buck, one that could have been his double. It was just before the heart of the rut, when bucks are extremely aggressive; visiting scrapes, scent marking, cruising. It is dusk when they spot each other on the opposite sides of a clearing next to a powerline.

Normally in areas with high populations of does, fighting is unnecessary, as bucks do not need to compete, but the stage was set and the moment was ripe. Visual measures are taken through eyes that show much white; hair stands on end, they sidle stiff-legged, withers held low, ears laid back on lowered heads. In the next instant, worlds collide.

The evening silence is shattered by antlers crashing together, and a prolonged grinding and grating. Pounding hoofs crush ferns and snap branches. The bucks moan and grunt and bawl as they exert a tremendous and constant force. The battle carries out into the powerline. Face against face, they circle, always pushing, gasping mouths agape. The battle goes on for several minutes until the buck gains an advantage when his opponent steps into a woodchuck hole and falters. The rival buck, almost bowled over, turns and runs for his life.



Neither buck was born in this neck of the woods. The victorious buck came here as a yearling in the spring of that year from across the great river valley and farther down the opposing mountain range, eight miles distant. It was the deer season of that year when he discovered the safety of the steep sidehill.

AT MIDDAY the buck stands up and stretches. He licks his nose and looks about and exits the weed patch. He nuzzles acorns along a log where the snow has melted a bit and continues up the hill. He joins two does, and together they feed and loaf along, luxuriating in the sunshine.

The next morning finds the trio walking up the tram road. The lead doe suddenly stops, head erect, ears cupped. She stands like this for a full minute, then eases off the road, ears back, followed by another doe and the buck. Just as the buck turns a gun roars, and the buck collapses from a deadly high shoulder shot on this, the final day of deer season.

A young man stands on shaky legs from his seat in the weed patch and walks over to the deer. He marvels at the great buck, positive now that it was the same deer he had missed earlier in archery season. He had figured that come rifle season the big boy would be in the thickest, most inaccessible place possible, and looking uphill at the difficult drag ahead, he knew this was it.

The young hunter will return to the steep sidehill each season and take other deer. There will come a time, though, when he can no longer scale the grade. He will linger at the top, looking down through the trees, through the years, imagining at the deer that are there now, remembering those that were, satisfied knowing that they would always be there, far beyond his tenure in these lovely, snowy woods.

FIELD NOTES

Bad Hair Day

LANCASTER — Early one morning a red-tailed hawk crashed into my windshield and then found refuge in a nearby tree. It had little time to rest, however, as the harassing trio of crows that chased the hawk into my vehicle renewed their heckling efforts. And I thought I was having a rough morning.

— WCO JONATHAN S. ZUCK, MANHEIM

Try It, You'll Like It

Young hunters often ask how they can become more involved in conservation. One of the best ways is to join organizations such as The National Wild Turkey Federation, The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Ruffed Grouse Society, Pheasants Forever or others, and a local sportsmen's club. Not only can youngsters get physically involved, but they'll meet some of the best people in the world.

— LMO RICHARD LUPINSKY, E. SMITHFIELD

Right At Your Fingertips

TIOGA — I can't think of a better way to thank a landowner for allowing access to hunt on private property than by giving a gift purchased from the Game Commission's website. Go to www.pgc.state.pa.us and click on "The Outdoor Shop."

— WCO RICHARD J. SHIRE, MIDDLEBURY CENTER

Realistic

FRANKLIN — I was shooting next to Deputy Mark Garner during firearms qualification when our instructor, who shouts the type of weapon the "attacker" is using as our cue to fire, yelled, "chainsaw." Mark's first shot hit the wooden target frame, sending a large splinter of wood above the backstop.

— WCO BARRY A. LEONARD, CHAMBERSBURG

Showdown

WYOMING — Doug Gross witnessed two wild turkeys protecting their half grown poults from a red fox by putting themselves between it and the poults. Although the fox quickly disappeared into the brush when it saw Doug, he feels that the turkeys were up to the task of fighting it off.

— WCO WILLIAM WASSERMAN, TUNKHANNOCK

Real Treat

MONROE — Deputy Dave Brundage and I were patrolling on SGL 127 when some loud splashing caught our attention. We soon spotted three otters playing in a large stream, and after about 10 minutes we parted ways — the otters downstream and us upstream.

— WCO PETER SUSSENBACH, BLAKESLEE



Owls Galore

LYCOMING — One night while on patrol I heard a great-horned owl calling. Nothing unusual about that, however, screech, barred and barn owls soon piped in.

— WCO JONATHAN M. WYANT, MONTAURSVILLE

Energized

BUCKS — After processing a 350-pound bear, Deputy Dave Bonham and I were having a little trouble lifting the big bruin back into the trap to transport it to another area, until the bear lifted its head and looked around. Some onlookers rapidly departed, and the added incentive allowed Dave and me to get the bear into the trap in a hurry.

— WCO JOHN PAPSON, TRUMBAURERSVILLE

It Figures

HUNTINGDON — We reintroduced river otters back into the Juniata River watershed during the summer, and with each release I tried to get photos, but was never able to do so, because the otters would leave the transport tubes as though they were shot out of a cannon. Before the last release I left my camera in the truck, and wouldn't you know, the otter came out and then stopped to pose.

— WCO ROBERT A. EINODSHOFER, HUNTINGDON

Opportunities Galore

Colin Henkes from West Virginia said that his son Brandon would be hunting in Pennsylvania for the first time, so before the season they sat down with a calendar to decide which days they wanted to hunt. With all the new seasons and opportunities for youngsters, though, their wish list soon became full. Colin mentioned that he would have to take early retirement and have Brandon become home-schooled in order for them to pursue their busy hunting schedule.

— LMO GEORGE J. MILLER, MARIENVILLE

Grateful

FULTON — I'd like to thank the Fulton County Pistol and Rifle Club for the generous support they provide for our HTE classes and Youth Field Days. Many of our programs for youngsters would not be possible without such groups.

— WCO TRAVIS PUGH, MCCONNELLSBURG



New Record

PIKE — I responded to a nuisance bear call and sighted the bruin about 50 yards into the woods. The bear apparently smelled the bait in the trap and walked over to investigate, so I had to throw a handful of donuts away from the trap to keep the bear busy while I got the door set and ready to fall. I had barely (pardon the pun) finished when the bear walked over, climbed into the trap and the door came down behind it. The trap was still hooked to my truck, so all I had to do was drive away. The only way to catch a bear quicker would be to have one come to my house. Come to think of it, I've done that before, too.

— WCO ROBERT BUSS, HAWLEY

Visual Record

FOREST — A woman whose home borders the Allegheny National Forest looked out her window one day when she noticed a bobcat pounce on and kill a groundhog that had been living under her shed, which was 30 feet from the house. The bobcat fed on the groundhog for the next 45 minutes, until the woman's husband came home and frightened the cat off. When I told her I would liked to have seen that, she pulled out her digital camera and showed me a sequence of 21 photos she'd taken. The photos were absolutely incredible.

— WCO MARIO L. PICCIRILLI, SIGEL

Grass Looks Greener...

BEDFORD — Many sportsmen dream about hunting trips to Canada, but when I was fishing in Quebec last summer my guides Austin and Madeleine Gagnon emphatically told me how much they look forward to their annual deer and turkey hunting trips to Pennsylvania.

— WCO DAN YAHNER, EVERETT

Keep 'Em Comin'

YORK — I've prosecuted several poaching cases this year as a result of timely information provided by people who took the time to call. Don't stop calling now; the poachers sure haven't stopped!

— WCO GUY HANSEN, RED LION

When Normal, Too

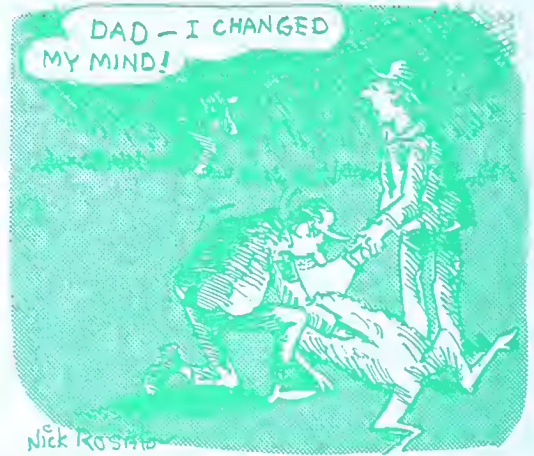
PERRY — Late last summer a fawn walked right up to a house, showing absolutely no fear of the occupants. One man even hand-fed the deer, and because there was the possibility of rabies, I had to kill the animal so it could be tested. As it turned out, the fawn had an abscess on the pituitary gland, which caused the abnormal behavior and, fortunately for the man, tested free of rabies. When wildlife appears sick or tame, it's always best to keep your distance.

— WCO STEVE HOWER, ICKESBURG

Mountain Goat?

FOREST — I was driving on Route 6 near Union City when I noticed a doe and her fawn on the shoulder of the road. As the driver in front of me came to a stop, the confused fawn bolted toward the side of his vehicle and began to scale the car as if climbing a ladder. After reaching the top of the car, however, with legs kicking wildly, gravity finally took over and the fawn fell to the ground. After regaining its composure, it sprinted into the woods.

— WCO DANIEL P. SCHMIDT, WEST HICKORY



All in a Day's Work

CHESTER — A young man and his father were holding a flashlight for me one night while I was trying to retrieve a bullet from a 3-day-old deer carcass that had been killed by a poacher. The young man mentioned that he had always wanted to become a WCO, but that he had suddenly changed his mind. I asked why the change of heart, and he said that watching me spend more than an hour with my hands inside a smelly deer carcass was enough to convince him to go into another line of work. All was not lost, however, as I found an intact bullet that could make my case. Thanks for the help, guys.

— WCO SCOTT S. FREDERICK,
SADSBURYVILLE

Tight Squeeze

BUTLER — I responded to a call about a deer trapped in a ditch and discovered the doe had fallen into a 1-foot-wide by 4-foot-deep channel that would house the water line for a new home. The deer was lying on its back, wedged in the ditch. I wasn't quite sure how to proceed, but with help from construction worker Al Hoak we devised a lasso with a slip-knot and dropped it down over the back legs of the kicking, grunting, unhappy deer. We were able to lift the deer out of the ditch, and it soon ambled off with no apparent ill effects.

— WCO RANDY W. PILARCIK, PROSPECT

Tables Turned

Joe Vorseik told me that he was inspecting some warm season grass plots on his farm when his dog ran into a wooded fencerow but soon scrambled back out with a deer hot on its tail. The deer chased the dog across the field and down the lane toward the barn until the dog made it to the porch of the house. I've seen plenty of dogs chasing deer, but never the other way around.

— RICHARD W. POLLEY, SR., GAME LANDS MAINTENANCE SUPERVISOR, PYMATUNING WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

Tweetie Bird?

FOREST — Rod Smathers of Pineville told me that one day his pet parrot had been making a boisterous racket when a curious bobcat emerged from the surrounding forest, looking for the source of the strange noises. The bobcat eventually sat down in the backyard for several minutes, leaving only when it knew it wasn't going to make a meal of the bird sitting safely on the other side of the screened window. The cat is now affectionately known as Sylvester.

— WCO RICHARD T. CRAMER, TIONESTA

Immediate Results

Bob Truax was cutting some pole-stage trees with a Royer Woodsman cutting machine on SGL 39 when he noticed a deer following close behind the machine, feeding on the fresh cuttings. When he stopped to let the machine cool down, he was surprised that the doe walked right up and ate the leaves that were on the cutting head.

— LMO JAMES E. DENIKER, SANDY LAKE

Color in the Game Bag

POTTER — I recently spotted a fox squirrel, which is the first I've ever seen here in this northern county. I sure hope to see more here in the future.

— WCO WILLIAM C. RAGOSTA, COUDERSPORT

Who Got Who?

VENANGO — I was sent to pick up a dead osprey that had been electrocuted when it landed on an electric line. Amazingly, the bird was still clutching a 6-inch bass in its talons on the right foot despite the leg being seriously burned, and its left leg had been burned off right above the foot. I figure the fish grounded out the bird and caused the electrocution. It's ironic that the bird and fish killed each other.

— WCO LEONARD C. HRIBAR, OIL CITY



Supervising

We were planting warm season grasses on a Streambank Fencing project on Phil Dean's farm in Lawrence County when Farm-Game manager Jeff Doran noticed a ringneck pheasant sitting on top of his seed bags. It reminded me of a homeowner watching the addition being built on his house to make sure it was being done right.

— LMO DALE E. HOCKENBERRY, EAST BUTLER

That's Another Story

SCHUYLKILL — Being new here I'm often asked why I don't write as many Field Notes as WCO Steve Hower did before he transferred to Perry County. While checking hunters, however, not one has said, "Write me a citation like WCO Hower did."

— WCO WILLIAM F. DINGMAN III, PITMAN

Read the Digest

SOMERSET — Deputy Louis Fisher and I stopped a vehicle whose occupants had been spotlighting at midnight, and one of the individuals asked me where the signs are that states the rules for spotlighting. I informed her that spotlighting may not be done after 11 p.m., and that we don't post signs for this regulation but that it's the responsibility of the participants to know the rules.

— WCO BRIAN E. WITHERITE, MEYERSDALE

Hindsight Is Always 20/20

SULLIVAN — Retired WCO Bill Bower invited me to appear on his weekly radio program, but before starting the show Bill mentioned that he had forgotten his glasses and was having trouble reading his notes. A few listeners stopped by the Bower home and explained Bill's predicament to his wife Mary Alice. By then, though, it was too late, and I wondered why Bill didn't keep an extra pair of specs at the station; he never missed a beat anyhow.

— WCO WILLIAM WILLIAMS, MUNCY VALLEY



Turtle Soup?

Recently, I was running my golden retriever when he went on point several times. Expecting a bird to flush each time, I was surprised to find him pointing box turtles.

— WCO AMY B. GLADFELTER, SOUTHEAST REGION OFFICE



Super Solution

CAMERON — WCO Doty McDowell and Deputy Dave Stubber, while processing a bear caught in a culvert trap, noticed extensive damage to the bruin's nose (probably from fighting with another bear). After contacting a veterinarian for advice, Doty was quite surprised when the vet told him to reattach the injured portion of the nose with Super Glue. According to the vet, the glue would hold until the nose healed.

— WCO CLINT J. DENIKER, EMPORIUM

Where's the Logic?

WCO Bob Prall and I, acting on a tip, were searching for bait near a hunter's treestand located at the end of a fencerow that split two cornfields. What had the violator used to bait his stand? You guessed it — corn!

— WCO DIRK B. REMENSNYDER, SOUTHEAST REGION OFFICE

Nothin' Like the Real Thing

POTTER — I noticed one of the new Game Commission billboard signs on Route 6, and was admiring the bald eagle and bear on the sign when, as if on cue, I spotted a bald eagle soaring high in the sky above the sign. A month later my wife spotted a bear crossing the road near the billboard.

— WCO MARK S. FAIR, COUDERSPORT

Action proposed to reduce bear-human conflicts

TO REDUCE human/bear conflicts, the Board of Game Commissioners at its October meeting gave preliminary approval to a regulation to prohibit the intentional feeding of bears. The action will need to be approved at a subsequent meeting, following a public comment period, before it takes effect.

"We recognize that people enjoy viewing wildlife, and the proposed regulatory change will not impact that activity," said Vern Ross, Game Commission executive director. "But, in light of the growing bear and human populations, we are obligated to reduce conflicts when and where we can. All too often, human complaints about bears can be traced to intentional or unintentional feeding of bears. To protect the public, as well as bears, we need to avoid the dangers associated with people conditioning bears to finding food around homes. This regulation will not have any impact on bird feeding or feeding of other wildlife, unless the feeding is attracting bears."

Mark Ternent, PGC black bear biologist and chair of the agency's Nuisance Black Bear Management Committee, noted bear abundance and distribution have more than tripled in Pennsylvania since 1980. "Pennsylvanians need to understand that habituating bears to humans can lead to conflicts and the potential for serious injury," Ternent said. "Feeding, whether for birds or other wildlife, has the po-

tential to attract bears. Once bears become habituated to an area where they find food, they will continue to return, which is when the bear becomes a problem for homeowners and neighbors.

"Capturing and moving habituated bears is costly and sometimes ineffective, especially when faced with the possibility of merely moving a habituated bear to another area where it may continue to cause problems. That's why wildlife agencies tell people that a 'fed bear is a dead bear.'"

Of the more than 500 people injured by bears between 1960 and 1980 in North America, 90 percent were the result of bears conditioned to people's food and people.

If approved in January, the change will make it unlawful — with certain exceptions — to intentionally "lay or place any food, fruit, hay, grain, chemical, salt or other minerals anywhere in the Commonwealth for the purpose of feeding bears, or to intentionally lay or place food, fruit, hay, grain, chemical, salt or other minerals that may cause bears to be attracted to or frequent an area."

If birdfeeders or other wildlife feeding activities are attracting bears, the proposed regulation would enable WCOs to issue a written notice prohibiting the unintentional feeding of bears at that location.

Based on an amendment offered by Game Commissioner Russell Schleiden, the change would be in ef-

fect until October 2004, at which time the Board could either extend the prohibition, modify the regulation or remove the prohibition.

For more information refer to Game Commission News Release #81-01, under the "Newsroom" section on the agency's website, www.pgc.state.pa.us.

New wildlife management units/deer management plans unveiled

A NEW WILDLIFE management unit plan was presented to the Board at the October meeting by the agency's Bureau of Wildlife Management staff. The new units will improve and, in some cases, simplify hunting and trapping.

The plan calls for the creation of 21 management units, grouped and identified according to five larger units.

The new management units will be used for nearly all species, including deer. The only two exceptions are elk, and waterfowl and migratory game birds. See "Wildlife Management Units" on page 26.

In a related presentation, Dr. Marrett Grund, PGC biologist and member of the agency's Deer Management Section, offered an overview of the development of a deer management plan. In July, to begin the public input portion of the process, Grund convened a meeting of stakeholders to discuss and suggest goals and objectives for the plan, and six goals were identified:

1. To provide public and private

landowners with the deer management tools they need to achieve their land use objectives;

2. To increase recreational opportunities involving deer;

3. To reduce human/deer conflicts;

4. To improve the health and sustainability of the ecosystem;

5. To increase citizen understanding of healthy ecosystems and deer herds; and

6. To improve and maintain a healthy deer herd.

Lastly, Dr. Gary Alt, Deer Management Section supervisor, presented an overview of the current draft of the Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP), which is designed to address specific deer management objectives within the new wildlife management units.

"While many people thought new deer management units would be smaller than the current, county-based units, the development of the new units demonstrated that smaller units would not be practical," Dr. Alt said. "Using the new, larger units, DMAP will en-

CONTACTING THE REGION OFFICES

Northwest — 1-877-877-0299

Southwest — 1-877-877-7137

Northcentral — 1-877-877-7674

Southcentral — 1-877-877-9107

Northeast — 1-877-877-9357

Southeast — 1-877-877-9470

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.

able public and private landowners to address deer management goals on a more localized basis.

"We are working to design DMAP to build a better relationship between hunters and landowners so that we can get the right number of antlerless deer harvested in the right areas. By doing

so, we hope to improve the deer herd and lessen deer impacts on the habitat."

The Bureau of Wildlife Management intends to present final drafts of the new wildlife management units and DMAP for the Board to consider at its meeting in January.

Regulations proposed to protect state from CWD

AS A FIRST STEP toward lifting the current ban on importing live deer and elk into Pennsylvania, the Board gave preliminary approval to a series of regulatory changes that would establish specific criteria by which elk and deer could be imported, while continuing to safeguard against the likelihood that chronic wasting disease (CWD) might enter the state.

On August 1 the Game Commission banned the importation of live cervids into Pennsylvania, and that ban remains in effect. The ban does not prevent deer and elk farmers from moving their animals within Pennsylvania or to out-of-state destinations.

CWD has been detected in wild and captive herds of white-tailed deer, elk and mule deer in several western states, Wisconsin and Minnesota, and two Canadian provinces.

CWD is a transmissible, progressive and always fatal disease that affects cervids, including all species of deer, elk and moose. There currently is no reliable way to test live animals for CWD, nor is there a vaccine. Clinical signs include poor posture, lowered head and ears, uncoordinated move-

ment, rough-hair coat, weight loss, increased thirst and excessive drooling. There is no evidence so far of CWD having any affect on humans or on other non-cervid livestock under normal conditions.

Among the proposals given preliminary approval, any elk or deer imported into the state must originate from a herd that has been enrolled in a CWD monitoring program for at least five years. Also, an application to import live deer or elk must be submitted to the Game Commission at least 10 days prior to shipment, and the applicant must receive the import permit before any animals are brought into the state.

The proposed regulation would require any shipment of live deer or elk to be accompanied by a certificate of veterinary inspection.

The Game Commission, working with Penn State veterinary officials, tested every elk taken in last year's elk season for CWD and other diseases, and all test results were negative. Every elk taken during this year's season will be tested, as will a significant sample of deer taken during the 2002 rifle season.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

PGC shooting team wins national title

MEMBERS of the PGC's shooting team presented the Board with the National Police Shooting Championship trophy they won in Jackson, Mississippi. WCOs David Carlini of Clearfield County, Guy Hansen of York County and Christopher Ivicic of Clearfield County

and Land Management Officer Steve Bernardi of Snyder County took national first place honors in the 4-Man Conservation Officer Revolver category.



Members of the shooting team are, left to right, WCOs GUY HANSEN; CHRISTOPHER IVICIC; DAVE CARLINI; and LMO STEVE BERNARDI.

In addition, Hansen and Bernardi took first place in the 2-Man Conservation Officer semi-auto match, and Hansen and Ivicic brought home several individual awards.

Board moves to require experience of exotic wildlife owners

AT THE OCTOBER meeting the Board gave preliminary approval to a regulation change designed to ensure that those who apply for permits to own, breed, sell or display wild animals defined as "exotic wildlife" have the proper experience.

In other action, the board:

- Approved sending a 2003-04 estimated budget to the Governor's Budget Office for consideration and approval. The budget holds spending increases to less than one percent of the 2002-03 level. The estimated revenues are \$64.8 million, while the estimated expenditures are \$68.6 million. The budget proposes using \$3.8 million from the Unreserved Game Fund Budget balance to cover the revenue shortfall.

- With new wildlife management units expected to be in place for the

2003-04 seasons, the Board gave preliminary approval to receiving all antlerless deer license applications at the Game Commission's headquarters, then distributing the applications to county treasurers on a prorated basis determined by the percentage of land each county represents within the new units.

- Gave preliminary approval to limit muzzleloading firearms used in applicable deer and bear hunting seasons to 44-caliber or larger.

This proposal must be approved at a subsequent Board meeting before it takes effect.

- Gave final approval to a packet of regulatory changes that will limit elk hunters to hunting elk in the management area and for the sex designated on their elk license. In addition, the action reinforces the illegality of sub-

mitting more than one elk license application per license year.

- Allocated \$5,000 to Outdoor Heritage 2003, which will take place May 1-3, at the Huntingdon County Fairgrounds.

- Approved a right-of-way for a township road to cross a portion of SGL 41 in Bedford County.

- Recognized Game Commissioner Nicholas Spock, M.D., for his last official meeting on the Board. A resident of Shamokin, Dr. Spock's 8-year term expired on November 22.

- Announced the next scheduled meeting of the Board will be held Jan. 5, 6 and 7, 2003, at the Harrisburg headquarters, 2001 Elmerton Ave.

Lehigh County group recognized for cleanup of SGL 217

THE Lehigh County Juvenile Probation Department was presented with a framed fine-art wildlife print in recognition of a decade of work on SGL 217.

During that span crews from the Juvenile Probation Department put in approximately 1,500 hours cleaning up dumpsites on the mountainous terrain of SGL 217. More than 3,000 discarded tires and 25 tons of discarded appliances, other large items and other trash were removed.

More recently, the crews removed 43 tons of rocks from newly created food plots on the game lands and painted four buildings and a barn foundation.

"This has been a remarkable cleanup project that has greatly improved the game lands," said Bruce Metz, Southeast Region Land Management Supervisor. "Now that the main dumps have been cleaned up, work continues on other projects."

Beatty wins 2003 duck stamp contest

JOCELYN BEATTY, Mercer County, took top honors in the Pennsylvania "duck stamp" competition, with "Presque Isle Canvasbacks." The painting depicts a pair of canvasbacks and the Presque Isle Lighthouse — the first man-made structure to appear on a Pennsylvania duck stamp/print design.

"The lighthouse was my husband's idea," related Beatty. "We both like lighthouses, and it seemed the perfect backdrop for the painting. The lighthouse and canvasbacks just work well together because of the same red, white and black colors."

Kerry L. Holzman of Bernville

placed second. Third place went to Sheree Daugherty of New Castle, followed by Sandra Blair, Harrisburg, and Barry L. Hammaker, Dillsburg.



Contest judges were Erie County WCO Darin Clark and PGC waterfowl biologist Ian Gregg from the Game Commission; Lew Walker, Ducks Unlimited Regional Director; Bill Czarnecki, a wildlife artist from Union City; and Joyce Sliter of the Erie Na-

tional Wildlife Refuge and state coordinator for the Federal Junior Duck Stamp Contest.

The 2003 voluntary duck stamp and fine art print will be available from the Pennsylvania Game Commission early next year.

Roadhunters beware

THANKS TO various sportsmen's groups, WCOs in the Northeast and Southeast regions have brand new deer decoys to help combat roadhunting.

Ed Grasavage, Second Vice President of Susquehanna Quality Deer Management Association, and Dave Wilcox of the Wilson F. Moore Chapter of the Pennsylvania State Chapter of National Wild Turkey Federation presented a deer decoy to the Susquehanna County WCOs.

The York County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs and the Pennsylvania Deer Association each recently donated two decoys for use in the Southeast Region. The donations were spearheaded by the Federation's president, Robert Hilker, and PDA's current president, Mike Creamer.

York County WCOs Guy Hansen, Chad Eyler and Amy Gladfelter accepted the donations on behalf of the Game Commission.



Accepting the deer decoy from local sportsmen organizations are; from left Susquehanna County WCOs CHARLES ARCOVITCH, JAMES MCCARTHY, and DONALD BURCHELL. National Wild Turkey Federation Representative DAVE WILCOX, and Quality Deer Management Association 2nd Vice President ED GRASAVAGE.

DEER HUNTER STUDY IN SPROUL

The Sproul State Forest will again be the focus of a deer hunter movement and behavior study. Starting on Saturday, November 30, researchers and students from Penn State and Bureau of Forestry personnel will be visiting campsites in the Sproul State Forest to solicit participation in the study. Like last year, hunters will be asked to carry global positioning satellite (GPS) units and indicate their hunting routes on maps. Similarly, on Monday, December 2, through Wednesday, December 4, researchers will stop hunters entering the forest to ask them to carry GPS units or to mark maps indicating their hunting activities during the day.



Off the Wire

by Bob D'Angelo

North Dakota

Hunters took 421,586 pheasants in 2001 — up 49 percent from the 283,759 taken in 2000. A good reproductive season in 2001 and a 13 percent increase in hunters (75,825 versus 67,176 in 2000) accounted for the higher harvest. Birds bagged per hunter increased from 4.22 to 5.46, and hunters averaged 3.6 days afield. The 2002 ring-necked pheasant crowing count survey revealed a 15 percent increase in numbers compared to 2001. This is the fifth year in a row the spring rooster index has shown an increase.

Firearm Production

Firearm production in 2000 declined in most categories from 1999, according to the latest statistics from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms. Rifle manufacturing was the only type of firearm to increase.

South Dakota

2001 small game harvests: cottontail rabbits, 77,574; squirrels, 20,972; pheasants, 1,361,250; grouse, 69,803; bobwhite quail, 417; ducks, 347,935; Canada geese, 149,030; and mourning doves, 200,999.

Ohio

There are 78 bald eagle pairs in the state, and eagles are nesting in 28 counties. More than 700 young eagles have fledged in Ohio over the past 10 years. This year's Buckeye State eagles reared 105 young eaglets, one short of the previous year's record number.

Wisconsin

Wildlife officials are testing between 40,000 and 50,000 deer taken during the recent hunting season for chronic wasting disease. Samples were collected from 500 deer from each county, 500 samples from each Deer Management Unit surrounding the CWD intensive harvest zone, and samples from all deer shot in the intensive harvest zone, which is located mostly in western Dane and eastern Iowa counties.

Illinois

Hunters took 99,167 deer during the 2001 firearms season — down from 101,000 in 2000.

Massachusetts

Hunters took 2,026 turkeys during the spring 2002 gobbler season — a six percent decrease from the prior season. Archery hunters took 21 birds, and the harvest breakdown was 888 mature toms, 1123 jakes and 15 bearded hens.

England

A fox entered a home in Kent and attacked a baby but was driven off by the child's father. The man was told later by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (a powerful animal rights group in Britain) that if he had harmed the fox he could have been prosecuted.

Established traditions are comfortable, just like a pair of old hunting boots. The boots fit just right for so long, though, and then one day you find they don't anymore. Deer management and the new deer hunting traditions we're acquiring are like that, too.

The Forecast Calls for New Traditions

PENNSYLVANIA Deer Hunter's Forecast." The words shone brightly on my computer screen. When I opened the Internet weather site, I was looking for a prediction of whether sun, snow or rain would be coming out of the sky at us deer hunters for the opening day of regular fire-arm season. Instead, I saw the state-personal prognostication.

Had I somehow entered a Pennsylvania section of the weather website? No, this was the site's homepage that everyone, hunters and nonhunters, Pennsylvanians and non-Pennsylvanians, gets to see. I clicked on the "Pennsylvania Deer Hunter's Forecast" bar, and up came the predicted weather for parts of the state for the start of deer season. I smiled, then I e-mailed some friends to "tune in" and take a look, before the picture changed. This was too good not to share.

Although I'm on the weather site quite often, I have never seen a "New York Deer Hunter's Forecast," a "Missouri" or a "Colorado Deer Hunter's Forecast." It seems that only Pennsylvania is synonymous with deer hunting, at least in the mind of whoever is responsible for what goes on the web

page. Pennsylvania's deer hunting tradition roots took hold before automobiles hit the road, and is now firmly established in cyberspace.

The words on my computer monitor made me stop and think. Their appearance on the Sunday night after Thanksgiving implied that the next day, Monday, was when Pennsylvanians begin to hunt deer. This is not true, of course, and hasn't been for some time. To be accurate, the "Pennsylvania Deer Hunter's Forecast" would have to be given nearly every day from early October until mid-January.

For 2002-03, bowhunting for deer began October 5, then early muzzleloading season came in October 19 for a week. Junior and senior license holders and those with disabled person permits had a deer season October 24-26. Archery season wound up November 16, and no deer seasons were open from November 17 to December 1. On December 2 regular firearm season started, lasting through December 14. December 15 through December 25 were skipped, and then flintlock and late archery seasons ran from the day after Christmas until January 11.



NOTHING SAYS "tradition" like a flintlock rifle, but even the long-established winter blackpowder season in Pennsylvania was at one time new and startling. This year, hunters could use not just flintlocks, but any muzzleloading long gun in the October antlerless season, breaking an old and perhaps establishing another new tradition.

That's a lot of time to be in the deer woods, if hunters obtained all the licenses and permits. Maybe those in charge of the weather website hadn't heard that Pennsylvania now has a deer hunting tradition which extends far beyond a Monday when we all pack leftover turkey sandwiches.

I have mixed feelings about Pennsylvania's changing deer hunting tradition. Or maybe I should say I have feelings that lean one way and a reasoning mind that pulls me another.

When I began deer hunting, what I knew as Pennsylvania tradition was bucks-only for two weeks following Thanksgiving, with one 3-inch antler as the legal minimum. Antlerless season, which we all called "doe season," was a 2-day affair, always the Monday and Tuesday after buck season. If the doe kill wasn't as large as the Game Commission wanted, we might get the following Saturday to hunt. If big snows blocked travel or drenching rain drove us into dry cars and to diners for soup on the two "doe days," we listened to the radio,

hoping for an extension.

Hunters back then could take one deer a year, either a buck or a doe, but not both. "One and done" was the rule, whether harvested in the then one-month-long bow season, the two-weeks-and-two-days firearm season, or the extended archery season in late December. If I tagged out early in my home state, the only way I could continue to hunt deer was to purchase licenses for other states. The up side of this was it gave me an opportunity to sample deer hunting in nearby New Jersey, New York and West Virginia.

"My" traditional Pennsylvania deer hunting wasn't what the older folks who hunted with me called traditional. They occasionally grouched about how deer hunting had changed in their time, and argued whether it was right or wrong. They knew personally or had heard from their fathers about a time when Pennsylvania had very few deer, when the charge to the Game Commission was to rebuild the decimated herd.

By the time I started deer hunting, the cutover woods of the state had long since regenerated, had passed through the brushy sapling stage of plentiful browse, and grown into pole and larger timber. Hunters enjoyed the resurgence of deer, but they remembered the time of deer scarcity. As the Game Commission instituted antlerless deer hunting to reduce a herd already grown larger than forest food could support, many hunters retained strong feelings against shooting does, the fawn producers.

The much earlier bucks-and-does Pennsylvania deer hunting tradition had changed to a too solidly entrenched bucks-only tradition. Some deer hunters even burned their antlerless deer licenses, in protest or to "save the does," they said. About the same time I began hearing about large numbers of winter-killed deer, emaciated animals gathering in snowy creek bottoms, their bones found there in the spring. Other hunters listened and learned as well, and antlerless deer season became

an accepted Pennsylvania tradition.

Every year that I bought my hunting license, I dutifully read the regulation booklet, because there were changes. In my time I've seen the early archery season grow from four weeks to six weeks. I've seen the winter muzzleloader season expand and shrink and expand in length. I've seen fire-arm antlerless season become a Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday affair, and then become concurrent with the 2-week buck season. And I watched the tentative beginnings of an October muzzleloader deer season, then saw it grow to a full-week hunt.

In my hunting career, antlerless deer licenses went from being few and difficult to get just one, to where I can easily obtain permits for several counties. Although I'm comfortable with this new tradition of multiple antlerless permits, I remember the TV news showing people camped out for the weekend in front of county treasurers' offices. They were in line to get one of a limited number of doe licenses when the courthouse doors opened Monday morning. I'm sure some of these people were sorry to see the party-like gatherings disappear, but most of us are happier waiting at home for the mail.

This year I'm witnessing more new twists on Pennsylvania's deer hunting tradition. For 2002 I was able to go out not only with my flintlock, but with any muzzleloading long gun in the October antlerless season. As I write this, I'm eager to try the inline, scope-sighted rifle that I bought originally for use in a neighboring state's muzzleloader season. I'm also experiencing buck hunting with markedly revised antler restrictions of three or four points on a side, according to where I'm hunting. These new minimum antler requirements may become an enduring tradition that rivals the longevity of the one-three-inch-antler rule. Or they may change.

Other states have their own deer hunting traditions, of course, even if they

weren't mentioned on the weather website. I hunt New York every year and have become accustomed to the longstanding shotgun only tradition in the section I hunt, as well as the concurrent buck and antlerless season.

I knew a concurrent season would work in Pennsylvania, having taken part in one for so many years in New York. In their response to changes in tradition, I would expect New York hunters to be no different from Pennsylvanians. If I suggested to southern tier hunters that they use rifles and separate their buck and doe seasons, some would be adamant about not changing. Others would be willing to give a different way a try.

Established traditions are comfortable, like a pair of old hunting boots. The boots fit just right for just so long, then one day you find they don't any more. The arch supports may have broken down, the soles lost their grip, the threads unraveling. Even the feet wearing the boots may have changed, widened perhaps.

Your decision to get new boots is not a whim, but is based on real need. As much as you've become accustomed to them, you admit the old standbys just don't do the job anymore. So you shop around, consider the best styles and brands, and make an informed decision before you lace up 'em up and go out of the store. You wiggle your toes and settle the heel in, walk around a bit, and soon the new boots don't seem so strange. In fact, they fit just right.

I figure the new Pennsylvania deer hunting traditions we're acquiring are like that. The Game Commission's alterations to previous ways of deer hunting aren't made lightly. They are the result of professional game management responding to continually changing wildlife populations and human land use. Cultivating an understanding and support of the Game Commission's efforts may be the best type of deer hunting tradition Pennsylvanians could establish and stick to. Come rain or come shine. □

The Naturalist's Eye

By Marcia Bonta

Recognizable as a nuthatch by its upside-down feeding habit, the red-breasted nuthatch is smaller and not as common as its white-breasted cousin.

A Red-breasted Winter

LAST WINTER we had our first ever red-breasted nuthatch at our birdfeeders. The little male zipped in and out from late November until late April, keeping his own company in as singular a fashion as our lone wintering song sparrow.

Was I merely dazzled by his rareness here to think him more attractive than his larger relative — the white-breasted nuthatch?

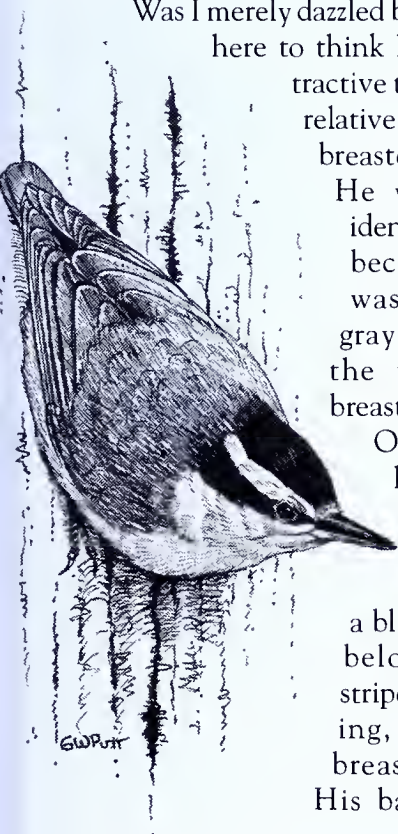
He was easy to identify as a male because his cap was black, not gray like that of the female red-breasted nuthatch.

Otherwise, he had the coloring of all red-breasted nuthatches — a black eye stripe below a white stripe, and a pleasing, rusty red breast and belly. His back was the

same silver-gray as the white-breasted nuthatch, but he was at least an inch smaller.

Red-breasted nuthatches prefer coniferous forests, and were formerly known as Canada nuthatches, because they're common residents of Canadian boreal forests. They particularly like fir and spruce species from the Pacific coast of British Columbia to the Atlantic coast of Nova Scotia and south along the Appalachians in the East and the mountains in the Southwest. However, they will settle for hemlock or pine, especially during the winter, when they eat coniferous seeds in addition to their year-round diet of adult and larval insects and spiders. When the coniferous cone crop fails, however, they sometimes head south in the winter, as far as the Gulf coast of Louisiana and the deserts of northern New Mexico. They have even wandered across the Atlantic Ocean to Europe.

The red-breasted nuthatch is the only one of the four North American nuthatch species to exhibit such irruptive movements. Usually they occur every two to four years, although at least a few red-breasted nuthatches move south of their breeding range every year.



Here in Pennsylvania, they are nearly always fairly common to common regular migrants in both spring and fall. The fall migration can begin as early as late August and continue through October. As Massachusetts ornithologist Winsor Marrett Tyler wrote in *Arthur Cleveland Bent's Life Histories of North American Nuthatches, Wrens, Thrashers, and Their Allies*, "We begin to look and listen for them in early August and, if it is to be a nuthatch year, we have not long to wait before we hear the little trumpet call and see the tiny birds romping and rollicking through the woodlands."

And through the weeds, according to Richard F. Miller, who reported a fall migration in northeastern Philadelphia back in 1914. "A remarkable feature. . . about the occurrence of this little *Sitta* [its genus name] here during that fall, was their habit of frequenting water courses fringed with dense growths of giant ragweed in which they sought food on the thick stems, petioles and leaves, often feeding close to the ground. . ."

William Dutcher, who observed a flight of red-breasted nuthatches on Fire Island Beach, New York, from September 21 to 23, 1906, wrote probably the best description of a heavy fall migration. "At the height of the migration, nuthatches were seen everywhere—on buildings, on trees, bushes, and weeds and even on the ground. They crept over the roofs and sides of the houses, examining the crevices between the shingles; they searched under the cornices on the piazzas and in fact looked into every nook and corner that might be the hiding place of insects. Every tree had its nuthatch occupant. On a large abandoned fish factory, at least 50 of these birds were seen at one time."

All of those red-breasted sightings were nearly a century ago. Yet on the Glenolden Christmas Bird Count in Delaware County during the high irruption winter of 1981-82, participants counted 325 red-breasted nuthatches, and last winter our neighbors,

Charlie and Marge Hoyer, whose feeders are three miles as the crow flies from ours, had several coming to their feeders. Other birders throughout Pennsylvania were similarly reporting them.

To our disappointment, though, the pine siskins and common redpolls that usually accompany a red-breasted irruption here did not appear. In the irruptive winter of 1995-96, which brought dozens of common redpolls and pine siskins to our feeders, a lone red-breasted nuthatch spent the last half of December and the first half of January in our hemlocks beside our stream in the company of dozens of black-capped chickadees. All of them were eating hemlock seeds on cold, snowy days.

Apparently, the late scientist Lawrence Kilham observed the same association between chickadees and red-breasted nuthatches in New Hampshire in the winter of 1972-73. Because hemlock cones are hygroscopic, meaning that they open only in dry, cold and windy periods, and close on warmer and more humid days, weather very much affects when birds forage on them.

Kilham reported no more than one pair of red-breasted nuthatches, and anywhere from one to 25 chickadees with an average of four to eight. During a light snowfall, those species were joined by a white-breasted nuthatch and golden-crowned kinglets. My red-breasted nuthatch also associated loosely with kinglets and white-breasted nuthatches, as well as tufted titmice. In the winter both resident and migratory red-breasted nuthatches may be solitary, as the one that visited our feeder was; form small flocks, as the Hoyers' did; or join mixed-species flocks.

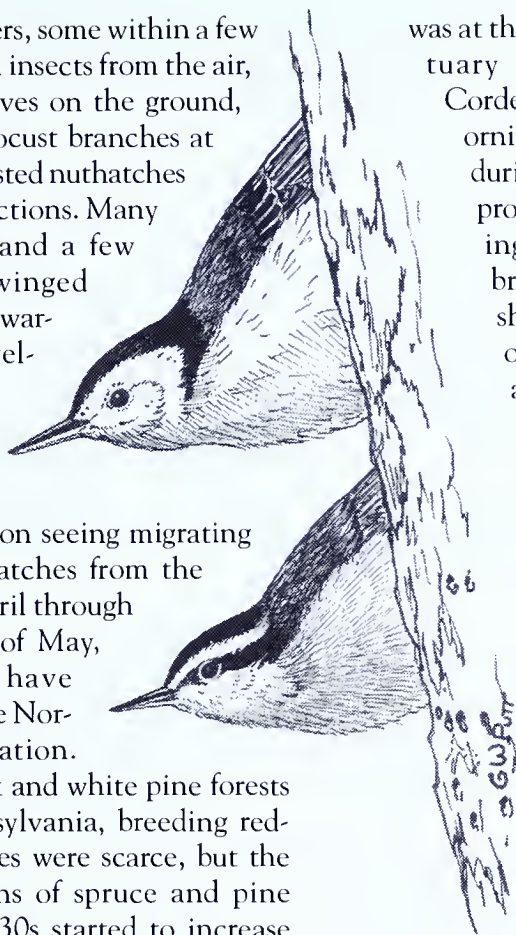
They also seem to join mixed-species flocks when they migrate north. After a common redpoll/pine siskin irruption in the winter of 1998, during which I saw no red-breasted nuthatches, spring migration was fantastic. The best day was May 7 when, sitting on Dogwood Knoll I was surrounded by migrating birds. Dozens of yel-

low-rumped warblers, some within a few feet of me, snapped insects from the air, foraged among leaves on the ground, and sat on black locust branches at eye level. Red-breasted nuthatches called from all directions. Many least flycatchers and a few Nashville, blue-winged and blackburnian warblers joined the yellow-rumps and red-breasted nuthatches.

In the spring, I can usually count on seeing migrating red-breasted nuthatches from the second week of April through the second week of May, but so far none have nested in our 2-acre Norway spruce plantation. Once the hemlock and white pine forests were cut in Pennsylvania, breeding red-breasted nuthatches were scarce, but the conifer plantations of spruce and pine planted in the 1930s started to increase breeding habitat for them by the 1960s. Today they breed in isolated spruce plantations as far south as York County, west in Beaver County, and even in urban Allegheny and Philadelphia counties, although the Poconos probably have the largest breeding population because of their native black spruce trees.

Red-breasted nuthatches form pairs on their breeding grounds, either during the winter, if they don't migrate, or as soon as they return. In addition to courtship flights, in which the female usually chases the male in slow motion, courtship feeding occurs only if the female vocalizes, or sings for her supper, so to speak. While engaged in courtship flights, feeding and subsequent mating, they also begin excavating a nest cavity in dead or partly dead trees. The female does most of the work while the male brings her food and watches out for rivals and predators.

The only red-breasted nest I ever saw



was at the Stanwood Wildlife Sanctuary in Ellsworth, Maine. Cordelia Stanwood, an amateur ornithologist and photographer during the early 20th century, provided some of the best nesting information about red-breasted nuthatches. It was she who noted that they "tap over each dead tree to find a suitable nesting quarters" and that one pair that she followed for several days "attempt[ed] to excavate a cavity in four or more trees before they found the site that best suited them."

She and other observers also watched the birds smear their nest entrance with resin from spruce, balsam fir or pine trees when they were finished building, and continually reapply it out-

side and inside the nest cavity throughout the incubation and nestling periods. They carry resin globules in on their bills, and sometimes use small pieces of bark to apply the resin. This unique behavior trait is probably a deterrent to predators and competitors, and rarely seems to harm either the parents or the young.

The female incubates between five and eight whitish eggs, while the male feeds her both on and off the nest during the 12 to 13 days it takes the eggs to hatch. Both parents then feed the young exclusively insects for the 18 to 21 days they remain in the nest.

I found the nest at the Stanwood Wildlife Sanctuary as I watched the parents feeding the nestlings, and I felt a bond with Stanwood who had watched from a blind as a pair fed their young. "They came and went constantly," she wrote, "sometimes caterpillars dangled from their beaks, at

other times their bills bristled with crane flies or moths. Once a bird carried in a large white grub, at another time the larvae of a spruce bud moth, and still again spruce bud moths themselves.”

Once the nestlings fledge the parents continue feeding them for at least two weeks and sometimes longer. Not much is known about either juvenile survival or how they disperse after they finish breeding, but a few observers have reported that

most youngsters leave their parents’ territory and strike out on their own. They may also make up a large portion of the red-breasted nuthatches that migrate south.

Here on our mountain, red-breasted nuthatches are like tiny magicians that pop up when you least expect them and then, just as quickly, disappear. Whenever I hear their call, however, I’m hopeful that they will someday find our spruce grove and set up housekeeping for the summer. □

Fun Games — By Connie Mertz

Beaver Chatter

Fill in the blanks to complete each statement, and then copy those letters marked with an “X” below to complete another interesting fact about beavers.

I’m the largest _____ in North America. I locate my food by
_____, not by sight, and my front _____ never stop
growing. I build _____ in water, from my favorite tree,
_____. My young are called _____, and they
_____ five to seven weeks. I can remain _____
_____ up to 15 minutes. My hind feet are _____
_____, and I make a slap with my tail to warn other _____
_____. I live in every state except _____.

_____ (unscramble)

I am one of the few mammals that can alter its
_____.

answers on p. 60

Today's technology is rapidly changing everything from bows to boots, but technology itself is not going to automatically ensure success.

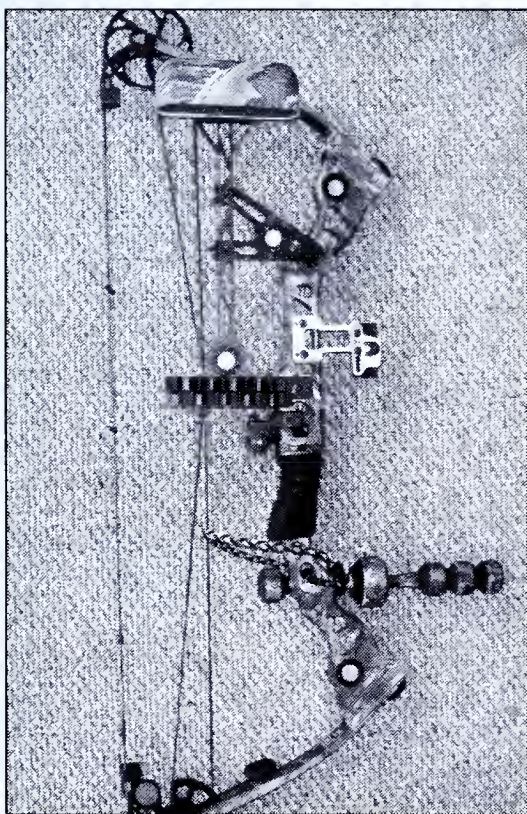
High-Tech Bowhunting

MENTION THE WORDS "high-tech hunting equipment" and you're sure to draw everyone's attention. While some people can't wait to see what's new, others feel that whatever it is, it will ruin hunting as we know it today. While new products seem to flood the market on a daily basis, each must be evaluated on its own

merits. Not all new products live up to their claims, and many often are of little if any benefit to the hunter. On the other hand, technology has provided some items that are truly beneficial and that every hunter should give some consideration.

Archery Equipment

Archery equipment itself has reached somewhat of a plateau recently, and many of the "new developments" during the last couple of years have simply been some old ideas in new packages. However, the one major exception has been the breakthroughs in vibration isolation and noise reduction. Two of the leading manufacturers in that effort have been Mathews Bows and Sims Vibration Laboratory, the manufacturer of the Limb Saver. Two years ago Mathews developed harmonic dampers that were built into the risers of several of their bows. These harmonic dampers absorb the vibration generated on the shot, making the bow smoother shooting and



THE AUTHOR'S hi-tech bow contains harmonic dampers in the bow riser, the bow quiver and the bow quiver mount. It has built-in string suppressors, and Kasun added Limb Savers, a vibration cushion on the hand grip and vibration absorbing stabilizers.

greatly reducing noise. This year Mathews went one step further by adding string suppressors to their Legacy and Icon models. The string suppressors make contact with the string as the bow returns to rest after the shot. This contact stifles the ringing vibration generated by the string and eliminates string noise completely.

While Mathews builds the dampers directly into the bow's riser, Sims has developed a series of add-on vibration absorbing products that can be added to any bow, bow quiver or sight. In addition, they have also developed a vibration absorbing bow stabilizer system that can be customized to suit the individual shooter. Although Mathews and Sims pioneered modern day vibration isolation technology, several manufacturers have jumped on the bandwagon, and vibration-isolating devices can be seen on a variety of bows, quivers, sights and stabilizers.

When it comes to my bowhunting gear, I'm a firm believer in keeping it simple, and I never add anything unless it improves my bow's performance or my accuracy. This new wave of vibration isolating technology does just that, and is the one new "gadget" that is a must in my book.

Although bowhunting gear keeps getting better with each passing year, some of the best high-tech equipment advances are being made in related outdoor gear.

GPS

The GPS (Global Positioning System) is a great bowhunting tool. These units that identify locations using satellite tracking information have become user friendly and very affordable. Because the GPS's main purpose is to provide direction and location, many bowhunters think it is intended only for those hunting large, unfamiliar areas.

While GPS units are obviously important under those conditions, they are also handy tools for hunting familiar ground. I use my GPS to record the locations of newly found deer sign and potential

treestand locations, for example. This eliminates the time that is often wasted trying to find a fresh scrape in a heavy thicket that I located on a scouting trip several days earlier. I also record each of my treestand locations, which I have numbered and marked on a topographic map at my home. When my wife is not hunting with me she knows which stand I'll be using and its exact location in the event of an emergency. I also use the GPS information when directing one of my hunting partners to a specific location.

Because I hunt a lot of swamp ground and heavy thickets, the GPS is especially useful when tracking a deer. If I have to leave the track for any reason I can record the exact location of the last blood, or the downed deer, and return to that spot without any difficulty, even in the dark. I also record the location of my vehicle before heading afield, and the GPS not only shows me the direction of my vehicle, but the distance as well. It has saved me a lot of work when dragging a deer through a thick swamp.

When selecting a GPS unit it's not necessary to buy the most complicated model. Actually, simpler is better. For the most part you want to be able to mark locations and be able to determine the proper direction to a chosen point, and even the most basic GPSs enable you to do that.

High-Tech Lights

Because bowhunting is often a morning and evening activity, a flashlight is an important part of every bowhunter's gear. When it comes to flashlights, the saying "You've come a long way baby," couldn't be more true. Several companies now produce high-tech light sources for specialized purposes.

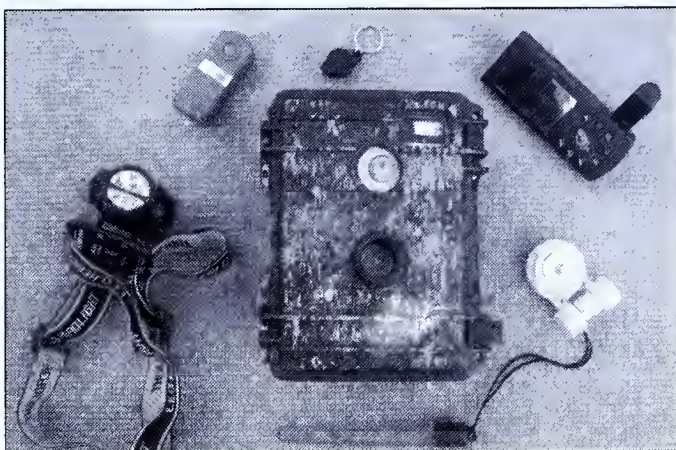
One such company is Essential Gear, which makes a series of high-tech survival lights that are well suited for bowhunting. One item worth noting is an adjustable headlamp with multifunction light sources. The light has three modes of operation

easily selected with the flick of a switch. The user can select either 1 or 3 LED lights depending upon the illumination needed, or choose the spot-light mode, which uses a Xenon incandescent bulb for a concentrated light for viewing at a distance.

This might not seem like a big deal, but the headlamp weighs just 3.5 ounces, operates on 3 AAA batteries and will last 80 hours when using the LED bulbs. That's a lot of light in a small package. These are excellent for going to and from your stand. The headlamp also leaves your hands free, which makes it ideal for climbing or descending a tree or when field-dressing a deer in the dark.

Another new light is the small Photon Micro-Light. These lights are smaller than a quarter and weigh a mere 5.5 grams. They use a replaceable lithium battery, which can provide light for up to 120 continuous hours. They are incredibly bright and are more than adequate for use in the field. I attach these to the zippers on my jacket and my backpack. They act as a zipper pull and always ensure I have an emergency light source close at hand if needed.

One of my favorite high-tech lights is the VIP, short for Visual Identification Projector. This light is a flashlight, emergency flasher and S.O.S. survival beacon all in one package. It's small enough to fit in the palm of your hand and weighs less than four ounces. The LED bulb has a life of 100,000 hours and the lithium battery provides more than 30 hours of continuous light, and more than 200 hours of flashing light. It comes with a built-in clip and can be fastened to almost anything. It's a great light for general use, and I have used the flashing mode several times when I needed to mark a location when trailing or recovering a deer after dark. In the event of an



IN THE CENTER of this assortment of high-tech gear is a motion sensing scouting camera. Other gear starting at the top right and going clockwise are: GPS, VIP light, Lazer Stik light, LED Headlamp, PAL Light and Photon Micro Light.

emergency, accident or if you become lost, the programmed microprocessor will flash S.O.S. in Morse code that can be seen three miles horizontally and five miles vertically. The unit is lightweight, small and operates under extreme weather conditions.

Game Scouting Cameras

One of the secrets of every successful bowhunter is their knowledge of what game is in their area, where it is located and when it's most likely to appear. One of the greatest tools that have been developed to help gather this information is the new series of remote scouting cameras.

These units consist of a camera and a motion detector or heat sensing device mounted in a weather proof camouflaged housing. The detector or heat sensor senses when an object is moving within camera range and a photograph is taken, and the time and date recorded on the photograph.

Although simple to set up and operate, these units are not foolproof. While they can detect motion, they can't tell the difference between a moving deer and a moving branch. Some care during set up, however, will produce the desired results.

Equipped with a flash unit these devices can watch your favorite hunting spot 24

hours a day. Most come with a built-in feature that allows a time delay to be set between photographs, so the unit does not take an entire roll of one deer standing in one spot wagging its tail. While most units use conventional film, some digital units are now on the market that allow the user to view the photos in the field and erase those not needed. The digital models also are more convenient than taking the film to the photo store for processing, but they are more expensive. As with most electronic gear, the price of these scouting cameras has dropped from the \$600 plus range down to \$250 or less, depending upon quality and features.

While these cameras are not a substitute for scouting, they can provide valuable additional information. Several years ago my cameras photographed an exceptional buck that I had never seen, even though I had scouted the area heavily. If it had not been for the evidence of his presence “caught on tape,” I might have hunted another area and passed up what could have been the best buck that area had to offer.

Clothing

High-tech developments that we tend to take for granted are the advancements in hunting clothing and footwear. Waterproof and windproof hunting gear incorporating names such as Gortex and Thinsulate can turn even the harshest weather day into a pleasant walk in the woods.

Clothing made from materials such as Hydro Fleece and Saddlecloth are tough yet silent. This combination is critical to a bowhunter who normally operates at close ranges, when the slightest sound can mean the difference between success and failure.

One of the most recent high-tech developments has been the incorporation of a scent absorbing layer of carbon directly into clothing and footwear. This carbon technology has proven extremely effective in reducing or eliminating human scent —

something that is number one on every bowhunter’s list.

Although designed for many outdoor activities, ArticShield has developed a series of cold weather products well suited for the bowhunter. The company has developed cold weather gear that reflects up to 97 percent of a person’s body heat without using chemicals or batteries and is paper thin. This technology has allowed ArticShield to develop a pair of booties that can be slipped over a light, comfortable pair of hunting shoes and keep your feet warm in temperatures as low as 20 degrees below zero for up to eight hours. These units are efficient, lightweight, weighing only eight ounces, and they can be easily rolled up and stuffed into a coat pocket.

These units are also well suited for those fall days in bow season when the morning and evenings are cold but midday is warm. By slipping these booties on and off as required, a bowhunter can stay comfortable all day under a wide variety of conditions. ArticShield also produces gloves using the same technology. This results in a warm waterproof glove that is thin enough to allow a bowhunter to easily feel the trigger of a release or place an arrow on the bowstring without removing the glove. The gloves also have a breathable layer that allows built-up moisture to escape.

High-Tech Pro or Con

Today’s technology is rapidly changing everything from flashlights to clothing, but technology itself is not going to change the face of hunting, nor is it going to automatically ensure success. With the ever increasing number of items appearing on the hunting market every day, it is necessary to evaluate each one to see if it is simply another gadget or has any real value. While I like to keep my bowhunting equipment simple, I also want it to be efficient. Some of the new high-tech gear does just that by making my time afield safer, more comfortable and more fun. □

The Shooters' Corner

By Dave Ehrig

The flintlock hunter in late winter is not only hunting when deer are at their wariest, but also when the weather can be the nastiest.

Late Season Foul Weather Flintlocking

THE LATE — great — flintlock season is the most challenging time to be a deer hunter. No warming rays of sunlight bring relief to frosted fingertips, nose and ears. Cold winds stab through the warmest of clothing, and feet lose their easy gait as they pull and slide through the snow and ice. Nowhere is nature kind to those who are not prepared for the long winter.

And into this fray stalks a tireless hunter. One who willingly accepts the knowledge that he's hunting not only when deer are at their wariest, but also

when the weather can be the nastiest.

To succeed, a flintlock hunter needs to be prepared for foul weather. While we would all like to believe that we can leave the warmth of the cabin, walk over the rise, and can squeeze off a lethal shot each time we hunt, that scenario is likely only in outdoor TV shows. A more realistic situation involves an unpredictable flintlock, hampered by the handicaps of wintry weather.

The first step in preparing for foul weather begins when you take the flintlock from the gun safe, cabinet, closet or case. You need to clean that "clean" gun. Most ignition problems occur because the grease and oil used at the end of the cleaning process turn into wintertime gremlins. As temperatures decrease, heavy oils and grease thicken and slow down the lock time, making shots inaccurate. To remedy this, take the lock out of the mortise in the stock and degrease the tumbler, sear, detent, spring, and any other metal surfaces requiring movement. Rubbing alcohol works well for this. After degreasing, lube the metal parts with a very light machine



BILL NESTER of Kutztown has prepared his .50 T/C flintlock for a foul-weather hunt in Bradford County.

oil, or even kerosene, which will not slow down the metal on metal movement.

After degreasing the lock, turn your attention to the barrel. Although it may seem silly to clean a clean barrel, excess lubes are the number one reason for foul weather misfires. Cold, thickening grease has a nasty way of plugging the touch hole. This not only causes a “flash in a pan,” it is also difficult to remove.

Lubricating oils also thicken, but they have another nasty side effect: smothering the black powder and raising its ignition temperature. In extreme cases, the black powder turns into a gooey paste that will never ignite. Now the barrel is useless until it is thoroughly cleaned, a time consuming process. A simple cleaning patch carrying rubbing alcohol would have eliminated this problem before loading.

Before you ramrod a load down the barrel, you need to check the ignition system, the flint and steel. A flintlock at 20 degrees Fahrenheit reacts differently than the one you practiced with at 50 degrees.

Without sparks, there is no fire. Sparks are microscopic pieces of iron that are torn loose from the steel surface of the frizzen. As temperatures go down, the steel becomes more difficult to work with, and one reason is the water present inside the pores of the frizzen. Water lubricates the frizzen, making it more difficult to get a good hot spark. While the water isn't visible, it is there and a brief exposure to heat will make it sweat off the frizzen.

Drying a frizzen pays big dividends and is easy to do. Be positive that the barrel is not loaded. This can be safely done by putting the ramrod down the barrel, measuring its depth, and then comparing it on the outside of the barrel. If the ramrod depth measures all the way to the touch hole, the gun is safe. An additional safeguard is to put a plug (toothpick or feather quill) in the touch hole.

Now you can apply the heat from a butane lighter. Apply the butane's flame under the base of the frizzen. Do not smother

the flame on the steel or the incomplete combustion will put carbon black on the surface. As the frizzen heats up, a layer of “sweat” water will appear. At this point, remove the heat. The goal is to “sweat” the steel, not raise the temperature to a point where it affects the temper of the metal. This is not a threat with a butane lighter.

Next, cover your frizzen. There is no point to having a dry, ready-to-spark frizzen if you are going to tote it around all day in foul weather. A fingertip cut from an old glove makes a great frizzen cover. While the old-time “cow's knee” (oiled-leather covers) sheltered the entire lock, a frizzen cover is smaller, easier to deal with, and does a more effective job preventing the absorption of water. Stay away from plastic wraps. They trap moisture, are a pain to take off, and leave a melted mess sticking to the metal if exposed to the heat of the flash pan.

While the steel frizzen gives our ignition sequence 2000-degree sparks, the red-hot steel pieces won't shower the pan of priming powder unless you have a sharp flint capable of scraping them free.

Don't be cheap with your rifle. After spending hundreds of dollars getting your muzzleloading system to a point of hunting deer, why scrimp with the flint? Remember that the cold has made it harder to rip sparks loose from the steel, therefore you need to make sure that the flint is sharp and solidly mounted in the jaws of the cock.

The flint commonly used on new reproduction rifles is a sawed-agate. The bevel has been created by machining it to a sharp edge. It works well when new and has two sides, but once used, cannot be resharpened in the field. Therefore, throw it away. Practice has dulled its ability to cut sparks. You need a brand new, sharp-edged flint to best ensure ignition in foul weather.

More experienced muzzleloading hunters go, instead, with the black English and

amber French flints. These true flints are naturally occurring rock nodules of fine-grained silica found in limestone and chalk deposits. They not only can be knapped into small, razor-edged rifle flints that have superior sparking abilities, particularly in foul weather, but they can also be easily knapped again to recreate a razor edge. This is done by striking the edge of the flint with a small tool, or even the back of a hunting knife.

With a new flint, or one that has been knapped back into sharpness, turn your attention to the mounting of the flint. Flints need to be solidly tightened into the jaws of the cock. As a wrap around the flint, Europeans use sheets of lead, Americans leather. Both work well.

Bevel up or bevel down, this doesn't matter near as much as the fact that the flint should be mounted so that at half-cock, the edge of the flint is just off the edge of the frizzen. I like the flint to strike in the middle, which gives me a compromise of fast lock time and a good shower of sparks.

How many sparks are enough? Think lucky number seven. While one good spark will ignite priming powder, a shower ensures ignition. To test for sparks, hold your empty, plugged touch hole, flintlock upside down in a darkened room. Snap the flint above your line of sight and count the sparks. (Be sure to wear safety glasses every time you fire a flintlock.) If you have less than seven, check your flint's position, edge and firmness.

A common problem that affects older rifles is a loosened hammer. This is best remedied by a gunsmith, but a quick fix is possible by upsetting the metal mortise in the center of the hammer's base with a ballpeen hammer and then tightening the bolt.

Now that you have a fast acting lock, a great shower of sparks and a cleaned clean barrel, you're ready to load. The big worry now is condensation. When metal — any metal — is taken back and forth from a



JOE TOGNOLI of Andreas, Carbon County, took this antlerless deer during a rough-weather hunt with a custom 45-caliber Pennsylvania Longrifle.

warm to cold environment, a film of moisture builds up. This can be prevented by keeping the flintlock outside, in a locked car, say.

But truthfully, if the bore is sealed with a greased patch, and the touch hole is plugged with a wooden toothpick or a feather quill, condensation will occur only on the outside of the barrel, where it can do no harm.

Hunters using lead slugs and sabot bullets have more of a concern. Because these bullets do not seal the grooves of the rifling, hunters need to go one step more: cover the muzzle crown. Using a rubber balloon or piece of plastic wrap, the powder will stay dry in the wettest of environments. And, accuracy is unaffected as the compressed column of air ahead of the speeding bullet will pop the rubber/plastic out of the way and leave the bullet's flight unimpeded.

Melting snow and rivulets of precipitation or condensation have a way of sneak-



Bob Steiner

Expanded antlerless deer hunting opportunities, through the sale of unsold permits, allowed Game News columnist LINDA STEINER of Cooperstown, Venango County, to harvest her first-ever whitetail with a muzzleloader last year in Washington County.

ing between the side barrel flat and stock and oozing into the flashpan. Obviously, if you keep the muzzle pointed toward the ground, this is not a problem. But this is not always the case, so preventative measures need to be taken.

A wax or thickened grease dam applied between the side barrel flat and stock mortise, will cause the water to drip harmlessly down the forearm. Placing a grease bead along the flash pan and then carefully seating the frizzen cover atop it, completes the waterproof seal of the pan. But, it doesn't hurt to change the priming powder every half hour, just to ensure there's dry powder in the priming pan.

What is the best priming powder? Obviously the one that stays dry and ignites at the lowest temperature. Black powder

contains a salt, potassium nitrate, which sucks moisture out of the air and into the black powder mixture, raising its ignition temperature to the point where it may not ignite at all: black ink. Therefore, the smaller the size, the greater the surface area affected by moisture. While dry 4Fg works the best, the larger grain size of 3Fg works better in foul weather, and still ignites at the same temperature, 480-degrees Fahrenheit.

FFFg black powder works well in the barrel, having 10 percent more energy/velocity than 2Fg, burns with less fouling, and doubles as a good priming powder in foul weather. But bulk Pyrodex does not. Its ignition temperature is about 740 degrees and does not ignite as easily from hot sparks.

The Pyrodex pellets have a black powder coating on their base, and in some rifles like the T/C Firestorm, will expose the thin line of black powder to the fire from priming powder. But, Pyrodex will not be satisfactory as a priming powder.

Now that the flintlock is ready for foul weather, there is one more advantage you can take: paint the old iron sights. By putting a dab of light blue paint on the front sight, and a skim of light yellow along the top of the open rear sight, you have created the perfect "sight alarm" for the color absorbing cones of your eyes, particularly in snow cover. The sights will suddenly become more clear than ever before in the darkened hues produced by a winter sky. A little dab will do, the rest is up to you.

And last but not least, "keep yer nose to the wind and yer powder dry!" □

Fun Game answers:

rodent, smell, teeth, lodges, aspen, kits, nurse, underwater, webbed, beavers, Hawaii.

NMEONTNREVI = ENVIRONMENT

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Last Chance, Jim Allera	May	Queen of the Fritillaries	Aug.
Three's a Crowd, Phil Burkhouse	May	Visitors from the Taiga	Sept.
One Lucky Day, Perry Bruno	May	The Leaves of Autumn	Oct.
Bowhunting Grassland Grizzlies, Derek Stoner	June	Alan's Bench	Nov.
The King of Hearts, Joe Parry	June	A Red-breasted Winter	Dec.
Trophy of a Lifetime, Larry Adams	July	Penn's Woods Sketchbook, Bob Sopchick	
Lost on Jacks Mountain, Lori Luckenbaugh	July	Outside the Box	Jan.
Hunting in the Big City, James J. Corsetti, Jr.	July	The Callmaker	Feb.
Wood Duck Hunting, Bob Ballantyne	Aug.	The Golden Pear	Mar.
The Buck Stops Here, Amy Francisco	Aug.	A Little Help	Apr.
The Minnisink Hunting & Fishing Club, Rob Wegner	Aug.	Longbeard Spring	May
My Birthday Present, Joe Yakobosky	Sept.	An Early Frost	June
2-Year Quest, Robert A. Gratson	Sept.	Poke Salad Days	July
This Sure Isn't September, John D. Taylor	Oct.	Scrapbook	Aug.
T-8202, Al Segar	Oct.	The Steadfast Hunter	Sept.
Lady Luck Pheasants, Jay P. Clymer	Oct.	A Full Palette	Oct.
Squirrels, Cornfields & Hedgerows, James J. Corsetti, Jr.	Oct.	Anonymous	Nov.
The Deer Meant Everything, Ralph C. Scherder III	Oct.	Portrait of a Whitetail	Dec.
Off Key Turkey, Joe Fleckenstein	Nov.	PGC Staff Written	
Double Trophy Friday, Dale L. Miller	Nov.	In Search of the Best, Larissa Rose	Feb.
Dad's Bear Hunting Legacy, Michael T. Huff	Nov.	Elk Hunt 2001, Bob D'Angelo	Mar.
The Dream Bear, Jim Comp	Nov.	The Woman Behind the Badge, Bill Bower	Mar.
Dad's Deer, Robert H. Miller	Dec.	Neighborly Solutions, Larissa Rose	Mar.
Gift Buck of Punky Hollow, Jerry Bush	Dec.	The Antler Lineup, Darren David	Apr.
Five Grouse, Bob Steiner	Dec.	A Sight to Behold, Larissa Rose	Apr.
The Toughest Hunt, Steve Martin	Dec.	A Place to Dream, Linda Swank	Apr.
Happy New Year, K. F. Metzler	Dec.	PGC Continues Raising Pheasants, Carl F. Riegner	May
Miscellaneous		More than Game, Larissa Rose	May
Aficionados of the Woodlands, Don Feigert	Jan.	Courtroom Melee, Mario L. Piccirilli	May
Ned Smith Legacy, Shirley G. Brosius	June	An Underground Turnaround, Larissa Rose	June
Tragedy To Triumph—Hunt of a Lifetime, Gregg Rinkus	Aug.	The Rescue of Ricky Russo, Chris Heil	June
To Snare a Flat Tail, Bill Everett	Sept.	The Vandals, Mike Doherty	July
Fawn Survival in PA, Justin Vreeland	Sept.	Becoming an Outdoors-Woman in PA, Lori Richardson	July
Oaks and Acorns, Chuck Fergus	Sept.	A Little Help from Man's Best Friend, Larissa Rose	July
Field Care of Venison, Jerry Chiappetta	Sept.	Deer Management and the Concept of Change, Bret D. Wallingford	July
The Naturalist's Eye, Marcia Bonta		Bald Eagles in the 21 st Century, Dan Brauning	July
Watching Winter Predators	Jan.	2001 Bear Season, Mark Ternent	Aug.
Great Backyard Bird Count	Feb.	Look to the Source, Larissa Rose	Aug.
Counting Raccoons	Mar.	Cooperative Effort, Dave Shaul	Aug.
An Aural April	Apr.	Antlerless Allocations: Here's Why, Bret D. Wallingford	Aug.
Turtle Woods Wildflower Sanctuary	May	Chronic Wasting Disease, Bob Mitchell	Sept.
Mobbed by Birds	June	The Crop Kill, Mario L. Piccirilli	Sept.
Coyote Birthday	July	Wildlife Education, Courtesy of the PGC, Larissa Rose	Sept.

New Antler Restrictions: Q & A, Christopher S. Rosenberry	Oct.	Otters return to southcentral PA	May
Make the Call, Richard Cramer	Oct.	Furtakers harvest 146 bobcats	May
Following the Wanderer, Lori Richardson	Oct.	Avoid the "bear necessities"	May
Some New Tools, Larissa Rose	Oct.	2002-03 seasons and bags	June
2001-02 Turkey, Small Game & Furbearer Harvests, Christopher S. Rosenberry	Nov.	Antler restrictions	June
A Reckoning in the Snow, Bill Wasserman	Nov.	2002-03 Antlerless license allocation	June
Enhancing Herbaceous Openings, Jon Marc DeBerti	Nov.	New bear season	June
When is the Rut?, Christopher S. Rosenberry & Bret D. Wallingford	Nov.	Youth pheasant season	June
Sonny and Sher, Bill Wasserman	Dec.	Game lands use regulations finalized	June
New Wildlife Mgt Units, Christopher S. Rosenberry & Matthew J. Lovallo	Dec.	Charges filed in illegal elk killing	June
		Landowners encouraged to enroll in CREP	July
		Landowners encouraged to consider Link	July
		Conservation projects funded	July
		Middle Creek program/art show	July
		Conservation projects approved	Aug.
		260 acres added to SGL network	Aug.
		Hunter/trappers reminded to carry ID	Aug.
		License application deadlines	Aug.
		Unsold antlerless licenses: good on public/private lands	Sept.
		Use of crossbows and muzzleloaders expanded	Sept.
		PGC officers continue presence on Governor's 20	Sept.
		545 bobcat permits for 2002-03	Sept.
		Waterfowl/mig. game bird seasons	Oct.
		Hunters encouraged to report banded birds	Oct.
		Electronic decoys prohibited	Oct.
		Pennsylvanians score well at YHEC	Nov.
		Bear check stations — Nov.25-27	Nov.
		Bobcat permits drawn for 2002-03	Nov.
		Action proposed to reduce bear conflicts	Dec.
		New wildlife management units unveiled	Dec.
		PGC shooting team wins national title	Dec.

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CROSSINGS

When Shadows Gather

THE SUN HAS LONG SET, and a cool breeze is drifting through trees I can only dimly see, yet I am reluctant to turn on my headlamp and shrink the world to a little puddle of light. Each fall, I spend four or five nights a week in the woods, often until long after midnight, tending nets that we've strung to capture migrating saw-whet owls. As interesting as this work may be, at times I think it is merely an excuse to spend hours like this, in the darkness of the nocturnal forest.

I've come to treasure that time, when most of the human world is cocooned in their insulated shells, blue TV light glowing from their windows. I love the nights when a full moon washes the forest with chilly silver light, when the shadows look sharp enough to cut you and our breath comes in ghostly white streams as we move up the trail in a quiet line. But I also love the new-moon nights when the sky is sable and quivering with stars.

The best thing about being abroad at night is that you run into a lot of wildlife the workaday world rarely sees. The high, birdlike calls and trills of flying squirrels in the treetops, or the staccato chittering and squeals of a shrew on the hunt, down in the Lilliputian world beneath the fallen leaves. I have surprised black bears and deer, opossums and weasels; I've had a skunk walk almost up to my feet before I knew it, while I was patiently disentangling an owl from the net.

One autumn, I found a meadow jumping mouse with ridiculously huge hind feet, a racing stripe of orange down each flank and long, elegant tail, feeding almost every night along the same patch of trail — and each night, it would bounce away like a ricocheting pinball. The following year, on a warm October night, we even found an extremely large timber rattler that had tried to crawl through a low-hanging fold of one of our nets. It never struck or even rattled as I tried to shake it free, then gave up and sliced away at the expensive net with a knife taped to a long stick — but we stepped more carefully thereafter, until the frosts came.

Yet for as much time as I spend in the woods at night, I always feel a slight bit of apprehension, just as the light flees and the dusk deepens. A few moments later, when the balance tips solidly on the side of night, the feeling vanishes, and I've come to suspect that tickle of warning is a relict of a distant past — our collective past, when darkness meant danger on the savannahs of Africa, or the cold taiga of Pleistocene Europe. Twilight was the time to be gathered in the communal safety of a rock shelter, with the comfort of a fire. Beyond, in the twilight, was a world given over to the supple movements of cave lions and the bark of hyenas. Our conscious minds have forgotten this, but something older in our brains still recalls it, when the shadows gather.

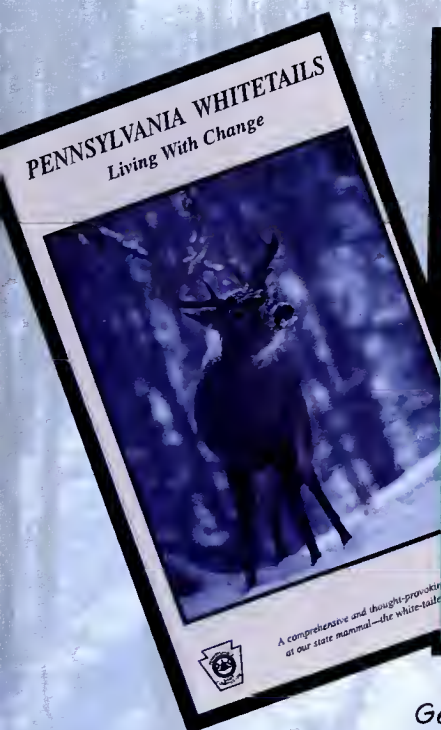
Scott Weidensaul



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